Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change
Series I, Culture and Values, Volume 24
Series IIA, Islam, Volume 13

God and the Challenge of Evil
A Critical Examination of Some Serious Objections to the Good and Omnipotent God

by
John L. Yardan

The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy

Gibbons Hall B-20
620 Michigan Avenue, NE
Washington, D.C. 20064

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication

Yardan, John L.
God and the challenge of evil : a critical examination of some serious objections to the good and omnipotent God / John L. Yardan.
p.cm. — (Cultural heritage and contemporary change. Series I. Culture and values ; vol. 24)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
1. Good and evil. 2. Philosophical theology. I. Title. II. Series.
BJ401.Y37 2001 2001000859
231'.8—dc21 CIP

ISBN 1-56518-160-3 (pbk.)

Table of Contents

Introduction

John L. Yardan and George F. McLean

Why does God allow evil? If He is all powerful, then He should be able to prevent it. If He is omnipotent and does nothing about evil, then we suspect that there are limits to His goodness, that there is something wrong with Him, that He is not all good. Perhaps He has an evil streak, or is truly malicious and we are merely His toys—expendable and counting for nothing. On the other hand, if we know the Creator is all good and we still see evil in the world, then there must be something wrong with His power. Perhaps He is not really all powerful. Perhaps there is some independent source of evil that He cannot control but struggles against. Or could a lack of knowledge possibly give rise to a weakness that limits his power? How can evil exist in a world created by a God who is both all powerful and all good? Must we say that the omnipotent good God does not exist? This problem is the greatest challenge to the reasonable person who believes in the Judeo-Christian-Islamic God. If He is truly the Creator, then why did He make such a world?

The goal of this book is to inquire into and possibly shed light upon, some of the most interesting and at times most difficult issues in the problem of God and evil. These are: the nature and meaning of good—how subjectivity or objectivity and the idea of the good person function in the problem; the meaning of omnipotence; the idea of supererogation in the context of the goodness of God and the best possible world; the possibility of pointless evil and its relation to animal pain; the possibility of diminished human freedom and of war. I will try to consider such issues in a direct and concrete manner in an effort to appeal both to the advanced scholar and to the philosophically and theologically inclined reader. The bright, thinking person struggling with his or her existence cannot avoid this problem whose solution challenges the most sophisticated scholar.

There are various ways to come up with some kind of solution to the problem, however unsatisfactory. One way is to prove conclusively that humans are not free, that all our actions are determined by antecedent conditions and causes. If humans are not free and God is all powerful, then the great evils of unkindness, insensitivity, infidelity, injustice, war and the like, the infliction of terrible harm on our neighbor—evils for which we ordinarily blame man—would rightfully be attributed to God. We would then have a strong reason for seeing God as an all powerful, but evil Supreme Being. The omnipotent good God of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition would not exist.

This was Herman Melville’s problem. He was profoundly affected by the evil that man does to his fellowman, the wicked things that the "depraved" impose on the rest of us. His "depraved," however, are predestined by God to their life of evil. So, it is not surprising that one of them, Captain Ahab of Moby Dick, strikes out against the God who has made him so.

One way (if not the only way) to avoid the conclusion that the all powerful Creator is an evil God would be to see a reason why He would bring about such suffering. Simone Weil, a French philosophic mystic of World War II days, would say that we exist to suffer, for suffering is the means whereby we become united to the Creator and attain infinite bliss. This is a hard doctrine, for it is too open to the interpretation that when I am cheated, when this man is murdered, when this girl is raped, then God is directly responsible for the cheating, the killing, the raping. The answer cannot be so simple. Ordinarily we try to avoid such unfortunate happenings, but why should we if their occurrence implies that God intends to affect us so?

Another way to solve the problem of God and evil is to see omnipotence as so absolute that God has power over contradictions. This would do away with the problem, for there would be no impossibility or inconsistency that the Divinity cannot transcend; the tension between God and evil, of course, is one of those. God would be expected to be able to make a square circle and make someone who lost virginity to once again be a virgin. This is very troubling to a serious thinker.

Another answer is to hold fast to the goodness of God and to downgrade His power. If there were an independent Supreme Evil with which God struggled, then God could be seen as good but not all powerful, and evil could be blamed as an independent source. Likewise, if at creation God had to fashion the world out of some pre-existent matter, then His (or Her) power would be fundamentally limited by what He had to work with. A variation of this latter view is offered by process philosophy.

Another approach to the problem is to reject a deterministic view of man which has God directly intending to burden us with evils. This makes the defense of the good God easier. If man is truly free, then he and not God is really responsible for the cheating, the killing, the raping that goes on. At least, man is responsible for much of it. He does not have to be selfish, uncaring, and niggardly toward his fellowman. Such a defense takes something away from God's power and leads us to ask whether God could have brought about a better world.

Faith affords us another possible solution. For those who see the reasoned evidence for God as less than compelling, faith can take up where reason leaves off and can lead a person to accept the Creator as good and powerful. In this view, God as the source of all perfection is likewise the source of all good and the epitome of power. Mindful of one's limited knowledge and of the way something that appears evil can turn out to be the source of good later on, a person holding such a view gives the benefit of the doubt to the Creator. A person concludes that God must have allowed the evil for a reason, or perhaps, that one's own goal should be to find meaning in whatever happens, be it good or evil. In this way one can become convinced that everything works together for good. This would allow one by faith to accept the evil of the world.

For some the existence of a good and all-powerful God can be attained by reason alone, for example, by means of the ontological argument. If one accepts God as the source of all perfections, as all good and all powerful, then by faith, again, one is inclined to accept evil as having some meaning in one's life, however mysterious.

The meaning of good and evil is obviously central to our problem. The rebel, Nietzsche, with a radical approach to this issue, goes so far as to link 'good' and 'evil' to power. Those in power decide what is good in the light of what is good for them, and those out of power see the powerful and their characteristics as evil. Nietzsche's rejection of objective morality threatens to throw into confusion the whole question. If what is good and what is evil is so subjective, then how can the problem of God and evil make any sense as a worthwhile project? Surprisingly, however, this intellectual provocateur who wanted to turn values upside down can be classed alongside the believers like C. S. Lewis and Simone Weil, who urged us to endure suffering courageously.

Another difficulty stems from the possibility that evil is not real in any sense, that it is a mere illusion of the human mind. If so, then the problem of evil becomes more a matter of the clarification of language, and the argument for or against God slides into mystery.

A variation of this difficulty is to understand the privation view of evil as downplaying the importance of evil. C.G. Jung complained that taking evil as a privation, a lack of being, was dangerous because it led people to downgrade the reality of evil. The traditional position, however, sees privation as a reality. It is the absence of something that should be present, a disorder, a mistake. It is a reality that is known by the mind rather than the senses, but a reality all the same;

it is "something" of which we must take account in our day-to-day dealings. Failure to achieve a desired goal, the absence of someone who should be at your side, the mistake that results in a waste of resources—these are recognized as part of reality which we must acknowledge. They might be negative, but they are real and must be dealt with. The easy way out of the problem of evil is not available to us.

Another solution is that God is not good or all powerful because there is just too much evil in the world. It is here that objectors claim that God should have made a better world, and that it is not fitting to speak of supererogatory actions in regard to God. Chapters Six through Thirteen of this work attempt to answer such objections.

The answer of Albert Camus to the problem of evil is that all evil in the world occurs because God is punishing man for his sins. This view is supported to a great extent by a common biblical interpretation of the Fall. Opposed to Camus is the Christian philosopher-theologian, John Hick, who, following St. Irenaeus, proposes an explanation other than punishment. For Irenaeus, man was created immature, inferior to God and, as an infant, was to grow and develop into the likeness of God. God's punishment is possibly not the only answer to why evil exists in the world. We consider the role of punishment in Chapter Fourteen.

The plan of this book is constructed around the objections to the good and all powerful God. Toward this end, it is necessary to say something about the idea of evil, subjectivity and reality in Chapter One, and then about the problem itself in Chapter Two. In order to speak of the goodness of God, the notion of "good" and the good person is taken up (Chapter Three), and then the difficulty and adjustments necessary in applying those ideas to the Creator (Chapter Four). Since the God of whom we speak is not only good but all powerful, the omnipotence of God is treated in Chapter Five.

The difficulty of determining the best possible world and the role of supererogatory actions in the demand that God bring about a better world is considered in Chapter Six. Chapter Seven considers the possible objection that there is too much evil in the world, gratuitous or pointless evil, especially in the case of animal pain. Chapter Eight studies the demand that God intervene to prevent evil.

Chapter Nine is an attempt to answer the objection that God should have given humans a greater knowledge. Chapter Ten attempts to point out the weaknesses of a demand that God should have seen to it that human freedom is more restricted. This continues in Chapter Eleven which rejects as unrealistic the objection that God should have made war impossible. Chapter Twelve treats of the destructiveness of overwhelming suffering and possible ways to handle it. Chapter Thirteen examines developing virtue in a relatively perfect world, and freely chosen suffering as a personal decision. Chapter Fourteen explores how punishment functions in the problematic, why children suffer. Chapter Fifteen reviews the consequences: a summary.

The work points to a better understanding of good and omnipotence in the theist tradition. Many of the objector's proposed alternative worlds fail as worlds that a good and omnipotent God should have created. This may give us a more sophisticated insight into the divine Creator.

Of course, this work of answering objections to the possibility of a good and omnipotent God which derive from the reality of evil in the world still leaves one on the outside as it were. It counters the objections, but does not resolve the issue. Hence, there is a further and essential step, namely, a metaphysical study of being and its character as good, of the human will and its potentiality for failing in its tendency to that good. Intensive work on this issue of the cause of moral evil is to be found in the Thomistic synthesis. The very heart of this challenge has been studied in this series by Edward Cook, *The Deficient Cause of Moral Evil, according to Thomas*

Aquinas (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1996), to which the reader is strongly referred.

There the reader will find a most careful and incisive treatment of the key concepts of the mystery of moral evil: good, evil, will, freedom, morality, privation, deficient cause and moral evil, which are central as well to the corresponding issues of liberation from evil and redemption.

These two books are then inseparable and must be read together

Chapter I
Evil: Preliminary Notions

In the Book of Job we see Job's sons die in a great storm which collapses their homes around them. Lightning strikes Job's sheep and his shepherds. Job himself is covered with itchy scabs and boils. Similar disasters are not unknown to us who live in a vastly different world. We need but open our morning newspaper or turn on the television news and we will see the destruction of a tornado, earthquake, flood or crippling disease. We can listen to the victims express their shock at having lost all earthly possessions; we can see their grief at the deaths of loved ones, and often, their gratitude for being still alive. At times we ourselves are victims, and we feel firsthand the pain that at other times appears real but remote. This is natural evil, the kind of evil that impacts on humans through the external forces of nature. It is the kind of evil that humans must suffer because we are part of this mysterious, physical, biological universe.

Generally persons consider genuine evil the destruction and suffering that occurs in such disasters. Broken bodies and devastated homes can hardly escape being called evil. It is rather that the suffering resulting from such occurrences is an unavoidable event that is to be expected in the world as we find it. This attitude is characteristic of the type of scientific mind that accepts the laws of nature as fundamental, assumed starting points. The acceptance of natural evil is rooted in an attitude that inclines one to accept the world as it really is, and not to ask for further reasons why things are as they are. If such persons are caught in a hurricane or tornado and cannot escape, then they see their own suffering as an inevitable and natural consequence of being alive. Those who deny that nature embodies a conscious mind have even a greater tendency to accept natural evil as inevitable, as a necessary part of the world we live in. Both kinds of thinkers would probably deny that humans have some special right to be protected from natural evil. They might bitterly resent the human condition and resolve to live their lives in a grim show of courage. Or they might understand that to prevent such a condition one would have to change the laws of nature, a requirement they would see fraught with difficulties. There is also the possibility that they see natural evil as not truly evil, that all evil is really good in disguise.

Such thinkers would easily mark as genuine evil a second kind, namely, human or moral evil. This second kind of evil, distinct from natural evil if we accept human freedom, results from the way we treat each other; it results from human mistakes and faults, and sometimes malice. We know such evils very well--they are the evils done to us by those closest to us, by our family, by our colleagues, by our neighbors, by those who live in our own city. They can affect us deeply and are especially painful. The evils imposed on us by other human beings we feel more poignantly than those inflicted on us by animals or by the forces of nature. If a branch of a tree falls on us, or a dog bites us, we are physically hurt and we suffer. However, if a son strikes his father, or a trusted friend spreads lies about us, the hurt is on a different level altogether. Even if we merely think that our friend has betrayed us, we suffer.

No doubt, some of the worst evils are inflicted by humans upon their fellowman. The Holocaust, mass murder, genocide, torture, indiscriminate killing--such evils are so destructive that they leave one amazed, terrified and sick. We find it hard to believe that persons can be so cruel and uncaring toward other human beings. The evil of what is done is magnified when we see that innocent people who want to live in peace are put upon or caught up in bitter battles waged by others. In many of the worst instances of evil--those that occur in war, rebellion, and struggles for power and wealth--the agents of evil know full well that some innocent lives will be destroyed.

Up until the modern era, civilians in time of war were classified as noncombatants and in general were protected. Now they are attacked as part of the war machine, caught up in the turmoil of destruction. We should not be surprised, then, when we hear of a Coventry or of the way in which the central city of Dresden during World War II was carpet bombed and laid waste in a firestorm that left charred bodies imbedded in the pavement.1 Or . . . when we hear that innocent members of a local tribe are massacred by a government military. Or . . . when we hear the story of a German officer's wife in World War II, a beautiful girl who, with her two little boys, by mistake boarded a train headed for the death camp, Treblinka. Once there, her explanations disregarded, she and her sons were gassed lest the secret of that camp be revealed.2

Evil, since it is a fundamental, metaphysical term, is not easily defined. And yet, if we take definition as a laying down of some boundaries, as a setting apart, then we can see that some progress can be made. A factor that makes the challenge more daunting is that every person defines evil in his or her own terms. It is as if each person sees it against the background of his/her own life and culture.

- Martin Buber recognizes evil in the conduct of the soul towards itself. A person only knows factually what 'evil' is insofar as he knows about himself.3 Evil is a problem which every individual must face for himself, for it involves placing a value on things. It involves making a decision as to what is good and what is evil, and developing an attitude toward the possibility of avoiding evil or transforming it into good. In his *Between Man and Man* Buber calls evil the "aimless whirl of human potentialities" which by themselves will make things go awry. Evil in the soul is "the conclusive shirking of direction."4

- Josiah Royce, the early 20th century American philosopher, takes evil as that which man finds repugnant or intolerable. Humans shrink from evil. We flee from it, we try to expel it and try to put it out of sight. Man resists evil, assails it, and struggles to overcome it.5

- J.L. Mackie considers real evil to be physical evil: pain, suffering, and disease. These he calls first-order evils which he contrasts with second-order evils, namely, malevolence, cruelty, callousness, cowardness, and situations in which things get worse rather than better.6

- Norman Pittenger's process view calls evil that which holds back, diminishes, or distorts the creative advance of the cosmos toward the shared increase of good.7 Evil occurs when in a necessary adjustment of disharmony there is a contrast too great to be subsumed in a richer pattern. It is a violent opposition between two possible goals.

- Donald Walhout calls evil what hinders and destroys a thing's being. With evil we connect lack, real failure, stifling incompleteness, limited achievement, imperfection.8

- Frederick Sontag sees evil to be the blocking or cutting down of a person's ability to exercise his power.9

- Austin Farrer, the Anglican theologian, speaks of evil as the spoiling of a nature, the inhibition of an activity, the frustration of an aim, or the saddening of an existence which we take to be good.10

- Sri Aurobindo, the Indian philosopher, talks about evil in terms of whatever hurts a person's self-expression, self-development, satisfaction of the progressive play in himself of the conscious force of existence.11

- M. Scott Peck, the psychiatrist, defines evil as "the use of political power to destroy others for the purpose of defending or preserving the integrity of one's sick self."12

- Errol Harris calls good and evil "epithets indicating opposites on a scale of values." The terms `good' and `evil,' strictly speaking, have moral reference only.13

- Samuel Proctor, professor emeritus and author of *Sermons from the Black Pulpit*, eloquently states that evil is the condition that falls short of the good, that opposes the good, or that defies, threatens, jeopardizes, or defeats the good. It is conflict and war rather than concord and peace. It is racism and xenophobia rather than appreciation and understanding. It is hunger and want rather than adequacy, ignorance and dullness rather than enlightenment and curiosity.14

In many of the above attempts to convey the meaning of evil, we can see it as a shortcoming, an absence of something that should be present. Traditional theists would call it a privation, but Pittenger reminds us that, while privative, it is not merely a matter of appearance.15 Evil is there--in the world--because we recognize what the world is and what it ought to be. That we consider it as a privation or an absence of something that should be present, or a disorder, does not mean that it is not real. The traditional philosophers knew this. The blind man cannot see, but, as a man, he should see. The cheated customer has been done out of her money, but as a customer she should have been treated fairly. These are evils, and they are real.

We can also see in these attempts to "define" evil a strong subjective strain. Immediately above we see that we judge evil to be present because we have the capacity to judge what should be. Royce speaks in gut-response terms. Buber underscores the certainty of our knowing evil in ourselves--only. Harris and Peck are concerned with humans hurting others unjustly. Farrer and Sontag focus on the frustration and stifling of a person's activities. Surely, the subjective dimension of good and evil is real and demands attention.

The pervasiveness of the subjective aspect of good and evil can be seen in Jean Paul Sartre's *The Devil and the Good Lord*.16 Sartre's protagonist, Goetz, is deeply troubled by the difficulty in determining long run good or evil. He sets out to do evil in order to provoke God. He wants to do evil for evil's sake, but when Heinrich, the pessimist priest, tells him that it is impossible to do anything except evil, the contrary Goetz decides to devote himself to doing good. In his evil days Goetz wanted to take the city of Worms, to burn it, and to kill its inhabitants. The reformed Goetz issues a decree to spare the town. He establishes the City of the Sun, a place where no evil is supposed to exist, wherein violence, drinking, stealing, and spanking of children are forbidden. When those outside the City rape, murder, and plunder, Goetz's citizens, who detest violence, refuse to aid those who need their help. Goetz refuses to assume command of the army, for as commander he would have to discipline men and this would lead to hanging some of them. The rebels then attack the City of the Sun, murdering the inhabitants who refuse to defend themselves. Twenty-five thousand deaths occur before the rebels are defeated. Heinrich criticizes Goetz's actions as objectively evil, even though they were done with good intentions. In Heinrich's opinion, "God doesn't give a damn" whether man tortures the weak, kisses the lips of a whore, or dies of privations. Eventually, Goetz believes that everything he has done is evil and that God had nothing to do with it. He, Goetz, alone decided what was good or evil. He alone invented good. God is merely absence, loneliness, a hole in the ground, a crack in the door, silence.

The subjective dimension was expressed by Nietzsche when he claimed that what was called good by those in power was called evil by those out of power. The weak and subservient resented the powerful and sought dominance for themselves. They had a distinctive and different view of what was good or evil.17

Surely, the degree to which the subjective dimension of good and evil plays a role in our judgment of good and evil is considerable.

We see easily that every person knows what evil is--at least in his own life. No human being can escape its challenge. Intelligent and willful creatures that we are, we recognize and evaluate

actual and possible objects and events. The realities that we value favorably we accept, enjoy, and seek as good for us. We celebrate when we succeed in attaining them and are sad and disappointed when they elude us. Their opposites, the objects and events we value unfavorably, we call evil. From these we recoil when they confront us, we try to avoid them, and suffer when we must endure them. No person who is really alive can avoid such experiences.

The evil of disappointment is probably the best known to all. Often it is relatively minor, as when miserable weather spoils a weekend outing, or we misplace a favorite book. At other times it is more serious, as when we fail to receive an important document in the mail, or when we make a mistake and ruin an expensive object in our home, are turned down for a job, or become ill. It is a blow to our expectations and hopes of achieving something worthwhile, or, in some cases, to attain a place or status that we truly need in order to live our desired kind of life. In many cases it is not life threatening. And yet, it can be a real danger to our spirit, our sense of self, that inner dimension of our being.

Interestingly, the interior approach can be the means whereby we overcome evil. One way to do this is to deny its reality, to see the evil as non-existent or as essentially good. Some eastern views ascribe reality to the One alone and claim that all individuality is illusion. In the West, some who believe in God see everything that happens as the hand of God leading one to perfection. For them, the evil that makes us suffer is really good, something made good by its end. There is something to be said for the objection that these believers do not want to face up to the reality of evil. A more realistic approach would be that of the believer who recognizes the reality of evil and is determined to bring good out of it. Both approaches could be seen as an attempt to maintain an optimistic approach to life.

The way we interpret things that happen to us is crucial. The fact that, in many instances, our mental attitude can affect the type and amount of our pain leads us to take seriously the placebo effect, hypnosis, and psychosomatic medicine. The human spirit has remarkable resources which we can develop. We rightly praise a person for not caving in under the weight of unfortunate events, for often, as long as we are alive, we can do something about the evil that we must suffer. Intractable terminal illness, of course, is another matter.

We see the importance of the subjective dimension of evil when we understand that evils done by those closest to us are more painful. If a man is delirious and hurts us, we do not blame him. But our suffering becomes more acute, and we rebel if we know that someone is deliberately trying to harm us. This is what makes the torturer so detestable. He is a human being who intentionally causes his victim to suffer. If we see the torturer inflicting pain in the presence of the victim's loved one, the subjective dimension becomes even more prominent and the evil is intensified. Added to the physical pain of the victim is the mental anguish of the onlooker, as he sees himself as the cause of his beloved's pain.

The subjective aspect of evil again stands out when we experience the great intensity of unexpected, untimely evil. When a man in his nineties with a number of painful physical problems dies of a heart attack, we feel a certain sadness, but wonder whether his death is truly evil. Our feelings are more intense, more poignant, however, when an auto accident takes the life of a favorite twenty-two year old nephew, a mysterious disease strikes down a gifted person in the prime of life, or a child is run over in the driveway of her home. We are shocked when we hear that a terrorist bomb exploded under a politician's parked car, just as a brilliant cancer specialist walking his dog passed by. We are affected deeply by the news of the death of a young tourist who was stabbed to death in a subway as he fought off a gang attack on his father and mother.18

We are affected even more deeply if the death is not only untimely, but excruciating, as when a man is mangled in a piece of machinery or impaled on a steel shaft in a wreck; or . . . not only untimely but unjust and sickening as when we see a man lynched for a crime he did not commit.

Our subjective view of events becomes evident, too, when we see that someone deserves the evil of punishment. We do not feel bad about imposing a jail term on a rapist or a swindler. There is something right about the inconvenience and trouble I must go through when, living in the north, I go into midwinter without equipping my car with a powerful battery and good tires. If I do something stupid and harm a friend, I rightfully suffer his coolness toward me. Nor should we complain when we feel the pain of remorse that arises from failing to do our duty. Clearly, at times, we feel that it is right to suffer some evil. In such circumstances, the evil is more easily endured.

On the other hand, those who do not deserve to be on the receiving end of evil suffer more intensely. Feminists rightly complain at the effect of a male-dominated culture with the two-tier pay scale and the glass ceiling on advancement. The suffering of the victim and the parents of a twelve year old girl who was brutally raped is on an almost inconceivable level.

Many understandings of evil depend on tradition or taboos, as when we might judge people to be poor because they reject our culture and its emphasis on material values.

The powerful, interior factor can be appreciated when we see that there are healthy, handsome and talented people who think that life has not dealt them a suitable hand, and truly wish they had not been born. In contrast, there is the paraplegic who paints while holding a brush in his teeth. A wealthy matron, unhappy and bored, searches for meaning and excitement in a never-ending succession of parties. A young girl crippled for life is happy because she can write poetry. Could it be that human beings have it within themselves to become happy or miserable under a wide range of conditions, and that to a great extent they alone decide what they will become? Could it be that, to some degree, Goetz is right, for, in many instances, whether something is good or evil depends on how we look at it?

Subjectivity plays one of its most important roles in our determination of the amount of evil in the world. A number of the critics of the good and omnipotent God claim that there is too much evil relative to the amount of good, and that God is to be held responsible for it. A serious difficulty arises here when we realize that there is so much about the world that we do not know. Moreover, we see things selectively, which not only causes so many of our mistakes in our effort to predict the future but also limits the accuracy of all our judgments of good and evil.

Does our judgment not depend on how we look at things? And does this not depend on our background and upbringing? How much is it a result of our training? We know that the training of an aircraft pilot enables him to see things that other people miss. A musician picks up what others do not hear. A basketball coach watching a game judges a player in a much more accurate way than does an ordinary spectator.

Is there a kind of training that would be necessary and sufficient to enable someone to make an accurate judgment on the amount of evil in the world? Is it possible that some people are in a better position to judge it than others? Are some people better equipped to appreciate the amount of good?

What is the function of an optimistic or pessimistic personality on such a judgment? We know that some persons emphasize the negatives of life--they see a glass as half empty rather than half full. Can we really justify such a pessimistic attitude toward life? Could it be that I alone decide whether to become an optimist or a pessimist?

Could it be that the assessment of evil ultimately depends on how we want or choose to look at things? If this is so, then each of us has a license to see the world as he or she wants to see it.

We would decide whether or not there is too much evil in the world. And yet, if we should give this much weight to the subjective dimension of evil, we then must ask whether there is anything of the objective in it. The consequences of a verdict in favor of the complete subjectivity of evil are momentous.

If evil is basically subjective, then it cannot function as a part of the problem of evil.19 If we judge evil to be basically subjective, then the evil of the world is a problem only if we want to make it a problem, or happen to see it as a problem. And yet, if the problem of God and evil deservedly has the serious intellectual status generally attributed to it, the evil that functions independently as a challenge to the good and all-powerful God must be real, objective, genuine evil.

Even though everyone defines evil in his/her own terms, against the background of his own culture and in the light of his own goals and hopes, still much can be said for the view that evil really exists somehow independently of our own evaluations--as a standard according to which they are judged. Most of us feel ourselves drawn to mark certain events as truly evil. That is, we declare them evil not merely because we decide that they are evil, but because we are convinced with good reason that they are evil. We have the sense of discovering something real, something that is there. It is hard to see how anyone can say that killing someone merely because he belongs to a different race or nationality (as happens in genocide) is not evil. Or . . . that it is not evil to steal a child from its parents. Or . . . for a parent to abandon a helpless child. When we hear of a child left in a trash bin, it is as if evil is permeating our very being, taking over someone's life at that instant. We know that evil exists if we encounter a man who feels so alone, so alienated from society that he thinks nobody cares for him.

Some other instances that most persons would call evil in an objective sense, a sense which would not depend on the subjective disposition of the one judging: A man cheats another out of a large sum of money. An investment banker reveals confidential information about a client's intentions to the latter's competitor. A man tells lies about and destroys the reputation of a rival for promotion. In medical ethics it is generally acknowledged as wrong for a doctor to give a highly dangerous drug to a patient when another safer and effective drug is available. In the Tuskegee Experiment,20 a somewhat similar case, it was wrong to keep effective available medicine from a control group of syphilis patients whose disease was allowed to progress unchecked when a proper medicine was available. Other actions that are open to serious moral censure are the birth control experiment in which placebos were given to a control group of unaware Mexican-American women, while genuine pills were given to other subjects,21 and the World War II bombing of Dresden, a German city of no strategic value but overrun with refugees.22 Such actions admit of little or no justification.

Should one doubt the reality of evil, consider seriously J. Glenn Gray's remark in *The Warriors*: that any sensitive man who walks across a battlefield after the guns have stopped would be oppressed by a spirit of evil that surpasses human malice.23

In the problem of God and evil, it is necessary to consider both natural and moral or human evil. This, of course, assumes that humans act freely, and that humans are genuinely free. Otherwise, all evil (including infidelity, cruelty, murder) would be natural evil, with the clear cut blame laid at the feet of the Creator who would be seen as not omnipotent or not good.

Although an inquiry into the fundamental moral values and principles and their influence our judgment of good and evil is a respectable project, I will not take it up in this work. As for the subjective-objective problem, I am convinced that in each culture there is something objective about evil, and I will assume that position: that evil is objective--that it is not wholly subjective in

any and every instance--that evil can exist whether or not one thinks it to be such--that the problem of God and evil is a real problem.

Notes

1. Cf. David Irving, *The Destruction of Dresden* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1964), pp. 161, 188, 195. Irving puts the number of dead at 135,000, but a report in the "New York Times" of 7 March 1985 has the number not exceeding 35,000. Cf. Sec. A, p 26. The source is *Dresden im Luftkrieg*, Cologne, 1977, republished in Munich by Wm. Heyne Verlag, 1979.

2. Jean Francois Steiner, *Treblinka* (London: Corgi Books, 1969), pp. 346-348.

3. Martin Buber, *Good and Evil, Two Interpretations* (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 88

4. Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man*, trans. R. G. Smith (Great Britain: Collins-Fontana, 1961), pp. 103-104.

5. Josiah Royce, *Studies of Good and Evil* (Hamden, Ct.: Archon Books, 1964), p. 18.

6. J. L. Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 152-155.

7. Norman Pittenger, *Catholic Faith in a Process Perspective* (Maryknoll, N. Y.: Orbis Books, 1981) p. 52.

8. Donald Walhout, *The Good and the Realm of Values* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978), Ch. 3 and 9.

9. Frederick Sontag, *The God of Evil--An Argument from the Existence of the Devil* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 28.

10. Austin Farrer, *Love Almighty and Ills Unlimited* (New York: Doubleday, 1961), p 30.

11. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1982), p. 97.

12. M. Scott Peck, *People of the Lie--The Hope for Healing Human Evil* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), p. 241.

13. Errol Harris, "Atheism and Theism," *Tulane Studies in Philosophy*, vol. xxvi (1977), pp. 105-132. P. 113.

14. Samuel D. Proctor, "Evil: the Unfulfillment of the Good," *Facing Evil?Light at the Core of Darkness*, ed. Paul Woodruff and Harry Wilmer (LaSalle, Ill.: 1994), pp. 209-226; p. 211.

15. Pittenger, *Ibid*.

16. Jean Paul Sartre, *The Devil and the Good Lord*, trans. K. Black (New York: Alfred Knopf, Inc., 1960).

17. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Penguin, 1973), sec. 260.

18. "New York Times," Sept. 4, 1990, B 1.

19. Larry Hitterdale, "The Problem of Evil and the Subjectivity of Values are Incompatible," *International Philosophical Quarterly*, xviii, no. 4, pp. 457-469.

20. James H. Jones. "The Tuskegee Legacy: AIDS and the Black Community." *The Hastings Center Report*, Vol. 22, Nov.-Dec. 1082. pp. 38-40.

21. Robert M. Veatch. "Experimental Pregnancy," *ibid.*, Vol. I (June 1971), pp. 2-3. Robert Hunt and John Arras, ed. *Ethical Issues in Modern Medicine* (Palo Alto: Mayfield, 1977), pp. 265-270.

22. Cf. David Irving, "The Destruction of Dresden," *Ibid*.

23. J. Glenn Gray, *The Warriors, Reflections on Men in Battle* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), p. 51.

Chapter II
The Problem of Evil

The Russian philosopher, Nicolas Berdyaev, once said:

> The existence of evil is the greatest mystery in the life of the world and causes the greatest embarrassment to official theological doctrine and to all monistic philosophy.1

Evil is an embarrassment to all monistic philosophy because the one (monistic) principle, the source of all that happens in the world, has been traditionally thought to be good, not evil. If the good is the source of all that is, where does evil come from and how does it arise? The existence of evil is a mystery because the One Creator of All is supposed to be a good and loving God.

In the previous chapter we have seen that a more scientifically inclined person might not consider earthquakes, tornadoes, floods and other natural disasters to be evil. And we know that if we should try to catalog the worst evils of our time, we will very likely have a special prominent place for the evils done by man to his fellowman. The fact that humans do not have to harm their neighbor, and that somehow they can avoid violence toward others gives a special bitter character to human evil.

In one sense the distinction between human evil and natural evils makes no difference in the problem of God and evil. Critics can complain that God is responsible for human evil because he gave us such a meaningful degree of freedom. Or, . . . that humans are not free at all and, hence, God is responsible for all the evil in the world. Or, . . . that God botched the world, that he should have given us different laws of nature, ones that would preclude our being hurt by the processes of nature.

A recent writer, Richard Rubenstein, has expressed part of this shape of the problem of evil. The problem for him revolves around excess human evil and is rooted in man's inhumanity to other men. For Rubenstein, far more harm has been done by man down through the ages than by natural catastrophes. He thinks that the real objection to the existence of a personal or theistic God is that God's tolerance of hideous human evil cannot be reconciled with his perfection. After the horrible experience of the Nazi death camps, no Jew should accept the omnipotent God of history or the doctrine of the election of Israel as God's chosen people. Jews can remain a religious community without such doctrines. That God acts meaningfully in history is a terrible mistake, for if God acts meaningfully in history, then he is the ultimate author of Auschwitz. Should God tolerate the suffering of one little child, he would be infinitely cruel or hopelessly indifferent.2 Rubenstein is influenced by Fyodor Dostoevsky who, in *The Brothers Karamazov*,3 gives a number of examples of cruelty and wickedness in the world.

Dostoevsky tells of Richard the convicted murderer who grew up as a wild animal in the mountains of Switzerland. An unwanted illegitimate child, he was given to some shepherds who barely fed and clothed him and taught him nothing. He was cruelly beaten when caught eating the garbage given to the pigs. When he grew up he worked as a laborer and drank up any money earned. He robbed and killed an old man, and was put in a Geneva jail to await death. While in jail he was attended to by religious people who taught him how to read and write. Richard was converted to Christianity, thereby becoming an object of great joy to the inhabitants of the city who showered him with kisses on his way to the guillotine. Grace had descended on him, and he

was dying in the Lord. According to the pious inhabitants, it should have been the greatest day of his life.

Ivan complains about the cultured gentleman and his wife who flogged their seven-year-old daughter. He says that there are people who get great pleasure out of such things and when they are brought to court and declared not guilty, the spectators cheer. He tells how a five-year-old was beaten and kicked. Later, on the pretext that she soiled her bed, the parents smeared her face with excrement and forced her to eat it. They locked her in the outhouse until morning.

A retired general lived on his estate with two thousand serfs, one of whom, a boy eight-years old, injured the General's favorite hound. The boy threw a stone and inadvertently hit the dog in the leg, causing it to limp. The General took the boy away from his mother and locked him up overnight. The next day at dawn the General led a hunt with all his neighbors and serfs present. The boy was brought out, stripped naked, and made the quarry of the hunt. As he started to run the General shouted, "Sic `im," and the hounds tore the boy to pieces before his mother's eyes.

Rubenstein, shocked by such examples of evil, blames God for not intervening and preventing them. In a recent work, *The Cunning of History*, he suggests that in our own time war was an instrument of an "automatic, self-regulating mechanism" which was blindly yet purposefully experimenting with alternative means of population reduction. It would seem that in his view, if God exists, then he is both a cruel and an indifferent experimenter.4

There are serious difficulties with Rubenstein's view. He thinks that a good and omnipotent God who cares about humans should have intervened to protect the Jews during the holocaust. No doubt, man's inhumanity to man is an important problem even today. And yet, there is too much to be said for human responsibility and its failure, and to blame God for man's greed, incompetency, carelessness, apathy and the like, is unfair. Another expression of what is really the cause for many evils in the world is man's willingness to place the blame for his suffering on someone else. By making someone else the scapegoat for his own evil actions he thereby gets rid of his own guilt. Ernest Becker's suggestion makes more sense here. Men have abdicated their natural rights over goods and power, and have let others make crucial decisions for them. Mistaken decisions lead untold masses of men to death and destruction.5 Human beings do not have to give in to the tendency to engage in violence. Peaceful adventures can supply the passionate enjoyment that some men find in the exciting events of war. The deep-rooted apathy or greed that leads some men to ignore the plight of other humans who need their help desperately is a clear-cut failing of which we should not be proud. Perhaps Jung was right when he said "the principal and indeed the only thing that is wrong with the world is man.6

While Rubenstein holds God responsible for evil human actions during the holocaust, history points clearly to man as the cause. Europe's long history of anti-semitism was a human failure. So too was the failure in scripture studies or their misuse that led to seeing the Jew as a Christ-killer. The Allies allowed economic conditions in Germany to so deteriorate after World War I that the stage was set for a dictator like Hitler to seize power. The Nazi ideology was unsound, bizarre, and brutal. Nazi propaganda involved a massive distortion of the truth and was extraordinarily effective. The need for a rigid obedience to authority had been drilled into the populace for years. Rubenstein himself in *The Cunning of History* calls our attention to the very competent bureaucracy that effectively controlled masses of stateless persons. He also noted the element of greed that inclined management types and industry to cooperate in slave labor schemes.7 Despite these many human shortcomings and mistakes, Rubenstein is reluctant to blame man for the terrible evils that occurred, and talks about an "automatic mechanism" that actualized such evils. His suggestion is unconvincing and strange in the face of the evidence. It is as if man had no

obligation to his neighbor and no capacity for the love of his fellowman, no obligation to be just and decent to those around him, no duty to avoid cruelty to those around him, to say nothing of the need to show compassion and at times to sacrifice on behalf of those less fortunate than he. Difficulties also arise when Rubenstein looks to Dostoevsky for support. We should not find comfort in the company and complaints of Ivan Karamazov.

While Rubenstein indicts God as cruel because he allows terrible human evil, David Hume holds God responsible for all the evils of man's existence, including those resulting from natural disasters. Either God is not good because he does not prevent such evil, or God is put down for lacking the power to prevent evil, no matter where it is found. Hume expresses the traditional problem well when he has Philo say:

> Is he (God) willing to prevent evil, but not able? then is he impotent. Is he able, but not willing? then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? whence then is evil?8

According to Hume, if God's power is infinite, then whatever he wills is executed. However, neither humans nor animals are happy, and, hence, God does not will their happiness. God has infinite wisdom and never makes mistakes, and yet, the course of nature does not tend toward human happiness. Hence, God did not intend man's happiness. Later on Philo says that misery does not come about by chance. Its cause cannot be God's intention, for God is benevolent. Misery, however, cannot occur contrary to God's intention, for He is almighty.9

God's infinite knowledge together with the course of nature is what places the blame for human unhappiness on him. Here Hume positions himself with those who would see any evil at all in the world as a problem for the omnipotent and good God. Later on, however, in Part XI of the *Dialogues*, he talks about God making interventions in "the secret springs of the universe" and turning all the accidents to the good of mankind and rendering the whole world happy.10 A righteous armada of ships might always meet fair winds. Good princes would enjoy sound health and a long life. Persons born to power would have good tempers and virtuous dispositions. Hume is not proposing the elimination of all evil in the world by means of some divine interventions unknown to man. Rather, he should be classed with those thinkers who would propose a reduction in the world's evil as quite acceptable. Later on, Hume seems willing to accept a "cure" for most of the evils of human life. He says he would be content if man had a greater propensity to industry and labor, used his mind more, and was more diligent in applying himself.11 He thinks that almost all of the moral as well as natural evils of human life come from idleness.

When Hume talks about making the whole world happy and curing most of the natural and moral evils in the world, he is willing to accept a world with some evil as not posing a problem for a good and omnipotent God. Modern writers speak in terms of a person being happy even though he might suffer slightly from time to time.

There are other difficulties in Hume's discourse. It is possible that an infinitely powerful God might will that some things happen because a truly free human being wills them. If this is so, then it is likewise possible that at least some of man's unhappiness might be due to man's free decisions. Hume's view seems to presuppose a rigid determinism that cannot be justified as an accurate account of the way things are.

Again, Hume's presupposition that nature does not tend toward human happiness is questionable. One might argue that each man has much to say about his own happiness, that the subjective aspect is very important in such matters.

Again, divine interventions in the secret springs of the universe, turning all accidents to the good of humankind, is hardly a convincing possibility, given the great complexity of the universe and our ignorance of many causal relations. Hume of all philosophers should be aware of man's difficulty in reaching causal knowledge. If we really cannot attain a proper cause of something which will allow us to predict rigidly about the future, then how can we tell when God intervenes and when he does not? For all we know, he might be intervening here and now to prevent even greater evils from occurring. For all we know, we might be asking God to do the impossible, or to do something that would bring about an even greater evil. Hume talks about tinkering with causes that are unknown. This is most dangerous and appears to betray a commitment to acting upon ignorance. His examples of the fleet whose purposes are salutary to society and the prince whose life should be healthy and long are not much help. The fleet is involved in war, and war is more properly attributed to the failure of man, rather than blamed on God. While some thinkers might be convinced that man is destined to wage war upon his neighbor, their case is not very strong. One might argue that just as a rich, talented, and healthy person might make his life a hell on earth, so too, humans through their greed and selfishness are responsible for war. If so, then how can we establish a clear-cut obligation on God's part to rectify that which humans can correct by themselves?

David Hume believes that man's life is full of misery and suffering. In the *Dialogues*, Demea and Philo agree that man's life is characterized by unhappiness, misery, the unsatisfactory enjoyment of pleasures, riches, and honors, and the general corruption of his nature. Demea says that the whole earth is cursed and polluted. Fear, anxiety, and terror agitate the weak and infirm. The stronger prey upon the weaker, imaginary enemies trouble the innocent. Diseases and disorders of the mind are found everywhere. If a stranger from another world dropped in on us, he would see a hospital full of diseases, a prison crowded with evildoers and debtors, a field of battle littered with dead bodies, a fleet floundering at sea, and a country suffering under tyranny, famine, or pestilence.12

Ordinarily we consider the above kind of thinking as the mark of a pessimist. Not that the extreme opposite outlook is more accurate, for anyone who says that the world is made up completely of pleasantries is off the mark. And yet, many people are not terribly bitter about their lot in life. Many are thankful for the simple things such as reasonably good health and a chance to work at something constructive. Also, many of Hume's complaints above can be attributed to man's abuse of his freedom. Hume's pessimism seems to be the result of the human tendency to ignore or take for granted many of the good realities of life.

It is interesting that Hume is ready to accept a good God if his existence could be established *a priori*, without recourse to an empirical basis.13 If we could establish God's existence *a priori*, then all the evils Hume has complained about would not detract from God's existence and might easily be seen to be reconcilable to it. We would assume that God has good reasons for allowing so much evil in the world even though such reasons are unknown to us.14 Nelson Pike has pointed out that Hume's conclusion should be stated more firmly. From the existence of suffering and the existence of a good, omniscient and omnipotent God we should conclude that there must be a good reason for God to allow evil.15 This kind of necessary conclusion can also be reached in those theologies which accept the existence of the good God on faith. There the problem loses much of its force. Hume's view of the world as permeated by suffering is only a part of the story, and if taken as decisive, is misleading.

A present-day thinker, Edward Madden, sees the problem of God and evil as revolving around the existence of an excessive amount of evil in the world. The existence of some evil in the world

would not constitute a problem for the good and omnipotent God, for it could be needed as a means for developing character or for appreciating the good. The trouble is that there is too much of it. According to Madden:

> No one would deny that some evil is necessary or desirable. Some evil may be necessary for building character, some for understanding or appreciating good by contrast, and so on.16

For Madden, the problem of evil arises because we cannot easily explain the necessity or desirability of all evil.17 Gratuitous evil, evil that is *prima facie* unwarranted, is the source of the problem. There would be no problem if the universe were changed to eliminate this evil, while the other necessary evil remained.18

Such writers, as we saw in Hume, are accustomed to give some idea as to what changes they would make in order to get rid of unnecessary evil in the world. Their criticisms revolve around the concept of better possible worlds which, in their opinion, a good and all powerful God must bring about. A weakness of this kind of approach to the problem is the great difficulty facing anyone who tries to spell out what this better world would be. Oftentimes, the suggestions made are relatively few, and the consequences are not elaborated. This is not enough to establish a serious objection to the good and all powerful God. In later chapters I will consider some of these proposed possible worlds.

The problem of evil has been stated eloquently by the Jesuit theologian, G.H. Joyce:

> The existence of evil in the world must at all times be the greatest of all problems which the mind encounters when it reflects on God and His relation to the world. If He is, indeed, all-good and all-powerful, how has evil any place in the world which He has made? Whence came it? Why is it here? If He is all-good why did He allow it to arise? If all-powerful why does He not deliver us from the burden? Alike in the physical and moral order creation seems so grievously marred that we find it hard to understand how it can derive in its entirety from God.19

Joyce emphasizes the idea of the human mind reflecting on God and his relation to the world. This is important, for it opens up the possibility that the problem of evil is rooted in man's conception of the world, as possibly a problem unique to the human mind which makes value judgments. Moreover, Joyce points to the role that evil might play in the world, and suggests the possibility that there is a reason for it. Also, we see that God might merely allow evil, and we are reminded of the way in which all of us, good intentions though we might have, allow something evil to occur as we insure the actualization of a greater good. Then too, for Joyce, God is always present to us and able to remove the evil that burdens us. This evil is, again, not only the physical evil of natural catastrophes and disasters, but also the moral evil of man's inhumanity to man. We seem to be dealing with an imperfect, flawed world. Hume talked about the creation of the world as a botched job. Joyce talks about it as "grievously marred." The question, then, is, "How can the good and all powerful God produce such an effect?

Two other thinkers approach the problem in a slightly different way. The theologian, Dom Mark Pontifex asks:

> How indeed can there be even the possibility of evil when God is absolutely good, or how can the idea of evil ever have occurred to anyone?20

Pontifex points to the importance of the absolute character of God's goodness. If God is absolutely good, and the source of all that exists, then how can he be the source of evil? Or, how can evil have any basis at all in reality? How can evil exist if all that exists comes from the absolutely good God?

This view focusses attention on the problem of physical evils such as earthquakes, hurricanes and other natural disasters. It avoids the uneasiness and suspicion that is attached to any attempt to excuse God from any responsibility for the disasters of the world. Pontifex points to the importance of the absolute character of God's goodness in the problem. If God is absolutely good, then how can there even be the possibility of evil?

This theologian mentions another way of stating the problem: An evil thing tends toward a decrease in its perfection. Hence, where there is evil there is frustration. But, why should God create a world in which the powers he gives to creatures will be frustrated? This seems to contradict the fact that he has given them.21 Pontifex points up the realization of evil. While evil might be conceivable, why should God allow it to be realized? The only answer is that it is a means to some greater good which outweighs the evil. If so, then the question is: How can evil be an unavoidable condition for good?22

The Indian philosopher, Sri Aurobindo Ghose, like Dom Pontifex, has difficulty reconciling evil with a good and omnipotent God who stands above the universe, ruling and watching. This is especially so if the inexorable law of *karma*holds. If we take pain as a trial and an ordeal, then we are led to an all-powerful, cunning, psychologist-God who is cruel or morally insensible. The same would hold if moral evil is the result of ignorance. If pain is a punishment for moral evil, then we can ask why moral evil exists or must entail such pain and suffering? Such difficulties led the Buddha to reject the existence of a free and all-governing, personal God.23

For Aurobindo, all things that exist are what they are in terms of an ultimate reality; Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, a consciousness that is both creative and infinite self-delight. This leads him to ask, how can pain and suffering exist at all if this is so? If this ultimate reality, called *Sachchidananda,* is God, then he is all good. If so, however, who created pain and evil?

Aurobindo's answer to the problem of evil is that the Divinity also bears the evil and suffering that we find in the creature in whom he has embodied himself. Aurobindo points out that the law governing the world takes no cognizance of good and evil, but only of the force that creates, the force that arranges and preserves, the force that disturbs and destroys impartially. We do not blame the tiger for ripping apart its prey, nor the storm because it destroys whatever is in its path. The urge of*Sachchidananda* towards self-expression is central. This satisfaction of the conscious-force of existence develops itself into forms and seeks in that development its delight. Delight of being--universal, illimitable, self-existent-- seeks to realize itself as delight of becoming. This delight seeks in mind and life to realize itself by emergence in the becoming, in the increasing self-consciousness of the movement. As it seeks new forms of itself, pain and suffering occur.

If God and the world are so close as to be identified, then Aurobindo has an attractive solution to the problem of evil. But that is a big "if." A competitive partial solution is available in the more classic view in which God is basically other than the world. If created individuals are genuinely real and not mere concentrations of the Divinity, then pain is unavoidable in a world with biological life. If we are to have life as we know it, things must break down. If we are to have the variety of living and non-living things, then the way they act must have real consequences on

human beings. Humans are part of the physical world, not that different, not so high on the scale of being that they must be isolated from all suffering. Other things in the universe are more perfect in certain respects than humans and necessarily predominate when the two types of creatures come into contact. Pain does not have to be seen as a divine punishment for moral evil. It might be a natural consequence of our treating somebody badly, or something necessary because of the world, an indicator that steers a person away from greater evils. Pain can also be a means to offer us an opportunity to attain great dignity. Or, . . . a reminder to man that his true destiny does not lie in the material world which he must leave at death, trials are not necessarily evil. Tests give meaning to life.

So far we have seen a number of ways of conceiving the problem of evil:

The world is full of misery and suffering from human and natural causes, and God is responsible for it.

The real problem is man's inhumanity to man, and God's tolerance of it as a cost of freedom.

The real problem arises not from some evil in the world but from an excess of evil.

How can evil in any way come from the Creator who is absolutely good?

The problem of God and evil is a pseudo-problem, for only the One really exists, and it must suffer as it seeks new forms of itself in an ever expanding consciousness.

One might say that the problem of evil is not one single problem but a cluster of problems. Central to these problems is the need for evil to be accepted as real if there is to be any problem at all. If the designation of something as evil says nothing about reality, or if it is the mere free expression of an emotion, then we cannot be justified in blaming God for it.

Underlying all is the difficulty in seeing how a reasonable person could at the same time maintain that 1) God is omnipotent and omniscient, 2) God is good, and 3) evil exists. These ideas are not contradictory in themselves as would be the case if we were talking about a square circle or a married bachelor. There is always the possibility that a good and all powerful God has a reason for bringing about a world with evil in it. Good and powerful persons sometimes cause pain and suffering in order to bring about a greater good, as when a surgeon operates or parents rightly discipline their children.

Attempts to defend God's goodness are couched in language that tries to show how what happens in the world is compatible with the actions of a good person. Attempts to defend God's omnipotence take the form of showing how even an omnipotent being should not be expected to bring some things about. If either defense fails, then the believer's faith is challenged. The powerful, good and loving Creator whom he worships appears as basically evil or indifferent, or less than all powerful.

The Eastern thinkers who claim that anything beyond the One is not real thereby deny the reality of evil. This way out of the difficulty asks us to give up a truth that is at the heart of Western thought: the reality of the individual being. If they are right and our judgment that evil really exists is only a misguided illusion, then the problem of God and evil would be merely one of correcting our way of looking at things. I do not believe there is much support for this position.

Other non-starters are the basically subjective view of evil (as we have seen in Chapter I) and the idea of good and evil as the free expression of an emotion. Here again, the designation of something as evil would say nothing about reality outside of us, and, under such conditions, to blame God for evil would be strangely unwarranted. It would be another matter altogether if the

judgment of good and evil were a non-free expression of emotion, that is, if humans were determined by the Creator to express that emotion.

The objection to the existence of the traditional God can be put in the following way: If we accept the actual existence of evil, we have to reject either the goodness of God, his omnipotence, or his omniscience. If we reject his goodness, then we are left with a powerful Creator who is cruel and uncaring, someone who might now be toying with us. To worship such a being would be foolish. If we reject his omnipotence, we would have a good and loving God who was unable to help us should we need him, someone in whom we could place no hope.

Since omniscience and omnipotence are intertwined, a rejection of God's omniscience would downgrade his power. If God were not omniscient he would not know fully the consequences of his actions and hence could not be in full control. We would in effect be committed to worship a being who in a sense did not know what he was doing.

In order to be able to make a legitimate inquiry into either God as good or God as omnipotent, we must clarify what we mean by these concepts. The ideas of goodness and omnipotence, then, will be our focus in the following chapters. I will try to articulate meanings that are based in the theist tradition. My approach will not be historical, but that my findings should be consonant with the general theist tradition which forms the basis of the problem.

Notes

1. Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Divine and the Human* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1949), p. 86.
2. Richard Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966), pp. 69, 86-87, 204.
3. Fyodor Dostoevsky,"Rebellion," *The Brothers Karamazov* (New York: Bantam, 1970).
4. Richard Rubenstein, *The Cunning of History* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), p. 10.
5. Ernest Becker, *Escape from Evil* (New York: The Free Press, 1975), p. 62.
6. C.G. Jung, "After the Catastrophe," *Collected Works*, vol. 10 (Princeton, N. J. Bollingen, 1970), p. 216.
7. Rubenstein, *The Cunning of History*, Ch. 2 and 4, pp. 7, 79.
8. David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Part X, *Essential Works of David Hume*, ed. Ralph Cohen (New York: Bantam, 1965), p. 363
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 363-365
10. *Ibid.*, p. 370.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 371-372.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 358-361.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 373.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Nelson Pike, "Hume on Evil," *God and Evil*, ed. Nelson Pike (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964), p.98.
16. Edward Madden, "The Riddle of God and Evil," *Current Philosophical Issues, Essays in Honor of Curt John Ducasse*, ed. F. C. Dommeyer (Springfield, Ill.: C. C. Thomas, 1966), p. 196. Cf. also, Edward Madden and Peter Hare, *Evil and the Concept of God* (Ibid., 1968).
17. Edward Madden, *ibid.*
18. See also Tan Tei Wei, "The Question of a Cosmophoric Utopia," *The Personalist*, vol. 55 (Autumn, 1974, pp. 401-406, p. 405.

19. George H. Joyce, *Principles of Natural Theology*, 3rd ed. (London: Longmans, Green, 1957), p. 583.

20. Mark Pontifex, "The Question of Evil," *Prospect for Metaphysics*, ed. Ian Ramsey (New York: Philosophical Library, 1961), pp. 122-123.

21. *Ibid*.

22. *Ibid*.

23. Sri Aurobindo Ghose, *The Life Divine* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1982), pp. 91-96.

Chapter III
The Idea of Good and the Good Person

Is there a role for subjectivity in our judgments of good and evil? If such judgments are purely subjective, then we must be ready for profound changes in our conception of the problem of God and evil. In the story of Sartre, the protagonist, Goetz believes that the human person alone invents the distinction between good and evil. This provides little help toward developing a non-subjective idea of evil. If Sartre is right and evil is wholly subjective, then whether there is any evil or too much evil in the world would depend on any one person's decision. This would effectively dissolve or radically alter the problem of God and evil. If one must decide for oneself whether God is good or evil, the answer would depend on how one views the world. The sole purpose of discussion would not be to show how God is both good and omnipotent, but to express how each one of us sees the problem with no possibility of an intersubjective solution.

If radical subjectivity were at the basis of our judgment of good and evil, it would be useless to discuss human or divine goodness with any hope of establishing some firm guidelines. This, however, would be strange. If each person could invent good and evil for oneself, if there were no standards by which to judge one's decision, then we would be at the mercy of chaos. This would be taking a long step toward a world in which anything goes, in which what is good or bad, right or wrong, depends on some such criterion as someone's whim, or on who is in power. The radically subjective answer to what is good and evil is too great a concession to the non-rational and mystery. We cannot accept this; we do not believe that the non-rational and mystery should wholly control this issue and exclude rationality and clarity.

Here we must ask how a judgment of good and evil is made? Do I make it arbitrarily? If not, if I ground it on what the world is like, then I have given it an objective basis. I alone would not decide what was good or evil; I alone could not be seen as inventing good. Something other than myself would put a brake on what I might decide. Radical subjectivity could occur only if I maintained that what the world is like depends wholly on what I choose to see it as. This position, of course, would have to reject any idea of reality functioning as a criterion of scientific theory.

The judgment of good and evil can be deceptive. In his own effort to decide, Goetz makes an important mistake. He fails to see that the good that happens to a man can also be the occasion of a subsequent evil, as when a person wins a lottery and later becomes very unhappy due to situations that he cannot handle. Likewise, Goetz fails to see that good can be drawn out of evil, as when in war a soldier heroically saves the life of his buddy, or when a beautiful child results from a terrifying rape. Good can come out of evil, and evil can come out of good; and often what follows is due to a person's subsequent decision. The important thing is that we stay committed to the good and try to bring good out of whatever happens to us.

A better way of looking at things than the radically subjective is to accept the universe as containing actions that can have genuine inter-subjective good, as well as evil, consequences. Most of us acknowledge this, that some events and actions are really good or evil. This more realistic approach to things suggests that we should try to go beyond Sartre and seek a firmer foundation for our judgments of good and evil. One way of making a start on this is to note the various ways in which the relevant words are used.

A. C. Ewing in his *Definition of Good*1 gives numerous uses of the word. As we might expect, a number of them correspond to the opposites of explanations given in Chapter One.

Evil as pain and suffering (Mackie2) is opposed by good which gives us pleasure (Ewing), e.g., a beautiful sunset or a bright invigorating day. Good can also mean what makes something good as, e.g., the characteristic of pleasantness makes pleasure good.

Evil as the repugnant and intolerable (Royce3) is opposed to good as what satisfies a person's desires (Ewing) and is attractive. We try to keep the good in sight, move toward it, praise it and embrace it.

Evil as hindering (Walhout4), inhibiting (Farrers5) is opposed to good as helping (Ewing). Good can mean what is used as a means to something intrinsically good, as when we talk of pure water and food as helping to maintain health. This is called an instrumental good.

Evil, as blocking, hindering, inhibiting, frustrating, diminishing (Sontag,6 Walhout, Farrer, Pittenger7), is opposed to good as enabling and efficient (Ewing). What is good is efficient, as when we call a sharp saw or knife good because it enables us to cut something quickly and accurately, even though the action is bad in itself, e.g. a murder.

Good can mean what is efficiently produced (Ewing), as when we say that a car is made economically, according to a profitable plan and to proper specifications.

Evil as malevolence, cruelty, callousness, cowardness (Mackie), as a human action that destroys others (Peck) is opposed to the morally good in actions (Ewing) such as benevolence, kindness, considerateness, courage and treating someone justly. This allows us to use good to describe a moral person as a good person. Evil as the aimless whirl of human capacities which, if left by themselves without direction, make things go awry is opposed to the right order in a good person's life. Buber's remark that a person knows evil factually only insofar as he knows himself8 implies also that one recognizes good as that from which one departs.

Ewing also mentions the ultimate good that has no parts that are indifferent to the good.

In his consideration of the idea of the good as satisfying a person's desires, Ewing mentions the possibility that what one desires might not be what is really good for one. This points to a necessary presupposition: the distinction between desires that satisfy a person's legitimate needs from those that concern his illegitimate needs.

Good can mean what is intrinsically good, "good itself," and not good merely because it produces something else like health (Ewing). Intrinsic goods are things that we seek more for themselves than as a means toward anything else. For example, we enjoy a painting, a beautiful piece of music, a ball game, a movie, a play, an enlightening talk, a quiet cool evening by the side of the lake after a hot busy day, a refreshing swim, an invigorating walk through the autumn woods, a work of kindness toward someone in need who deserves it. We enjoy them for what they are and are not conscious of subordinating them to any other more ultimate goal. We take all of these as things of beauty and worth, things sought in themselves and for themselves. It is possible to admire them for what they are, because there is something about them that attracts us and gives us the sense that we are in contact with the genuinely real and valuable. Intrinsic good can describe the inherent attractive value that is found both in the flowers of nature and in those that have been lovingly cared for and brought to the fulfillment of their potential by a gardener: Or . . . in an artist's pigments which produce a marvelous hue.9

The good has a human dimension. This is so whether or not we explicitly choose to order our lives toward perfection. We cannot get out of our own skin and apprehend something as a dog or a fish would see it. As humans, we have needs that form the foundation of desires for food, drink, love, justice and the like. What is good is determined by these built-in needs and desires. We call various things good because they satisfy these desires.

In many instances our free choice of a goal or end determines the criteria by which we judge something good. If we decide to buy a car, we alone can decide what purpose it will serve. One person wants to make a statement. A good car for him might be one that is very powerful and stylish. Another person is looking for basic transportation and seeks out a vehicle that is reliable, small enough to park and easy on gas. A couple of modest means with three small children would not judge that a two-seater-sports roadster is a good car for their family.

Instrumental goods are distinguished from intrinsic goods in that they are sought not for their value in themselves but for what they enable us to do. A car, a meal, a book, a tool--all of these things are of this type. We do not seek them only for the pleasure, enjoyment or for the satisfaction they bring us by themselves.

Could it be that every good is to be viewed essentially in the light of something else, its goal? Is good always spoken of in a relative way? Must we always ask, "Good for what?" In many instances this seems to be so, as we can see from the above. When we speak of a good knife, a good day, or a good car we have in mind a specific purpose. Butchers have different kinds of knives, each of which is a good knife because it allows one to cut in a particular desired way. Carpenters use a special kind of knife, as do wood carvers and men who lay floor coverings. Collectors look for knives with elaborately sculptured handles or knives owned by historical figures. A good day for swimmers is not the same as a good day for farmers whose crops are dying in a drought.

Could every good except the ultimate good be considered an instrumental good? Possibly. That is, even the intrinsic goods can be sought because they are the means to a greater good. Take the person who enjoys an invigorating walk, but intends mainly the relaxation and the conditioning of his body that he really needs in order better to perform his job or pursue an athletic goal. He can treat his walk or exercise as an end in itself while intending that it leads to something ultimate or more basic.

This idea has a special place in the life of persons who are committed to the pursuit of perfection. Well-intentioned and sincere, they sacrifice time and money on behalf of destitute persons because they aim to live according to their moral principles and would be disturbed if they failed to do so. Considered in this way, all goods could be instrumental for some people.

There is another angle to this. Religious persons, as take pleasure in intrinsic goods, aware that they are leading to their perfection, can also see themselves as enjoying a participation in the Divinity, the Source of all goodness. In the presence of a beautiful painting, they can see themselves as participating in the beauty of God, an experience which, though finite, manifests somehow the greatness of the Infinite. The theist could say that we embrace the intrinsic goods in themselves and not as means because, insofar as they exist, they participate in the Creator’s existence and put us into contact with it.

Good as Complete. The idea of completeness and the approach to an ideal is an idea of the good that is not emphasized in Ewing’s classification. Something is good insofar as it approaches an ideal. It is on the way to fulfillment, to a sense of completion. This is an important meaning of "good." That which is good is complete, fulfilled. We formulate a particular ideal that functions as a standard, and we judge to what degree the object under consideration approaches the ideal. We know that there are minimum requirements for an object to be such, and we know that a "good" knife, for example, surpasses those requirements. Presupposing that we have at hand an object that meets the criteria of a chair, we judge how comfortable, supportive, and decorative, etc., it is with a view toward what we might call an ideal chair.

The good as knowable. Something can be called good because the intellect is drawn to it as a distinct object of knowledge. Our desire to know is one of the desires that points to a distinct human dimension of good. This inclines us to ask whether we can call something good because it is what it is.

If something like a knife, or a dog or a chair merely is, without our having any reason to call it a good knife, or a good dog, or a good chair, then can we call it good merely because it exists and meets the minimum requirements for calling it what it is? It might be a knife that barely does the job, or a watchdog that hardly "watches," or a chair that is a chair and nothing more. Another way of putting this is whether something we ordinarily call "bad" can be called good in any way.

We have to answer, "Yes," here, for an object, even though it is bad, can be viewed as a good of the intellect. In this sense, what meets the minimum requirements, even though it is an uncomfortable and rickety chair or a dull knife, is in a sense good, because it is at this time the objective goal of the intellect. That is, in meeting the minimum requirements the object appears as something distinctive, something that the human intellect is ordered to grasp and understand. Such an object fulfills the need of the intellect; it gives it something to know, and hence can be called the good of the intellect.

The intellect wants to know, and when it can distinguish a distinctive part of reality, it grasps what a thing is and is thereby partially fulfilled. Hence, there is a sense in which we can call something good, even though it does not go beyond the minimum requirements. As long as a chair has the essential characteristics that make it a chair, not necessarily a good chair, it still can be called good in that it can be known as a chair. It attracts and satisfies in a limited way the mind of someone who knows it. It does not have to be comfortable, durable, easy to carry, easy to clean or repair, small or large enough, or of the right color. Good is not necessarily in the realm of the accidental.

This meaning of good is significant and not to be underestimated. It implies that the object can function and has a place in the world. If a chair has what it takes to be a chair, even though it is uncomfortable and a little low or too high, then it is still good. In such circumstances someone who needs a chair is heard to say, "I'll take it. I need it. It's better than nothing." Note how the use of "better" suggests that it is good. If it were not good in some way, then it could not be "better." Merchants are on solid ground when they advertise a product in ascending price levels as "good," "better," "best."

Good as the ideal and the problem of God and evil. Here the importance of good as the ideal is central. For the problem of God and evil revolves about how well God fulfills the ideal of God. An attempt at the answer forces the consideration of another distinction: that between the ontological good and the moral good. The ontologically good God has everything such a being should have. The morally good God has a special relationship to morality. He is usually thought of as acting like a morally good person. We see here the possibility that an ontologically good God (a God who has everything he should have) might have a type of goodness that we cannot classify as moral, or that is moral only in an extended sense, or that is the ground of all morality. In a real sense he might be beyond moral good and evil. We will consider this question in the following chapter.

The Morally Good Person. In the remainder of this chapter we will focus attention on the morally good person. The reason: when discussing the problem of God and evil in the Western world, much of the literature presupposes that God is a person. The believer talks about God

creating us because he loves. The scriptures talk about his promising, his admonitions, his rewarding and punishing. Those who oppose the theist answer to evil often object that if God is all-powerful and still there is evil in the world, then God cannot be a good person. Rather, he is malicious, depraved, and cruel for allowing innocent persons to suffer so intensely. They object that if God is omnipotent, then he is not a good person. Their claim is that the good and all powerful personal God of the Judeo-Christian heritage does not exist.

Who the good moral person is is a complicated and difficult question. To answer it adequately, one would have to spell out a moral philosophy in great detail. Here I will merely provide some guidelines that a Judeo-Christian theist would use for the determination of a good person in the context of the traditional problem of evil. I will consider in a general way the good person as he/she is found in Western attempts to answer the problem of God and evil. Hopefully, a better understanding of what the tradition judges to be a good human being will provide a foundation for an understanding of how the Judeo-Christian heritage calls God good.

Who is the good human being? We face this problem each day as we make judgments about what we are about to do, what has been done to us, and what we hear has been done by and to others.

One meaning of "good person" is the perfect person who has all the desirable qualities in a superlative way. We might call him the "perfect husband" or her the "perfect wife." Such persons fulfill our ideals. They have been born with beauty, intelligence, organizational ability, artistic talent, strength. They have ontological goodness. In addition to their high degree of ontological goodness, they have developed character and virtues such as courage, compassion, fidelity. They are morally good persons. We know that in real life there are some persons who approach this ideal.

However, it is the second of these meanings that we consider to be the more important. The more common meaning of "good person" is the morally good person, no matter how he looks or what little talent he has. A person cannot help it that he is born ugly, with physical defects, or with little talent. And yet, we consider whether he is fair, considerate, generous, truthful, respectful of his fellowman, and the like to be of great moment.

It is true that we should not call a person morally good when she goes about doing good actions unconsciously. However, this would not apply to the person who develops her virtue over the years, such that, as if by second nature (although unconsciously), she regularly performs kind and virtuous acts.

The teleological plays a pivotal role in the development of such a good person. A person pursues as a goal the kind of life that he sees as ideal. This ideal functions as a criterion for his actions, which are good or bad insofar as they embody or lead to that ideal. This presents a problem, for there is always the possibility that one pursues a kind of life that he thinks is good for him but really is bad, not only for him but also for the rest of us, as, for example, when a father involves his son in a life of theft and cheating.

The question as to what kind of moral life one should live is complex at its root. Many of us accept as justified a set of moral principles taught us in our youth. As we mature we might critically examine our principles and inquire into the basis of our presuppositions. This is where one can run into difficulties that can force one to choose between different kinds of life. Even so, one cannot choose a kind of life blindly or precipitously. Rather, careful consideration is in order. One should try to justify rationally the kind of life that one wants to lead. A blind choice might involve commitments to principles that are highly questionable or the acceptance of some principles that should be rejected and the rejection of others that should be accepted.

Here we are concerned with the ideal moral life. Who is the good moral person as found in the Judeo-Christian tradition? What is the ideal life, or what is the kind of life that a person should live? To answer this question in detail is impossible in these pages, if at all. Here we will speak only in a general way, setting down some limits and guidelines that we find in the theist attempt to answer the problem of God and evil.

The negative approach to the good person. We will first use the negative approach, setting down the limits to the kind of life a good person should choose to live, what a good person should not do.

The person who gives himself over wholly to satisfying sense pleasures degrades himself as he neglects the formation of his intellect, of his capacity to be decent. He neglects the development of the virtues of self-discipline and rightful self-denial. The good person, then, is not an extreme sensual hedonist who advocates a life in which pleasure and the escape from pain is seen as the highest good, determining all actions. In a like way, we reject the person who thinks he can rightfully satisfy any deeply felt impulses, even his destructive tendencies, for this would allow him to hurt others unjustly, something we cannot condone.

The good person is not irresponsible. He should not live merely by following the orders of others. He should not seek power at all costs, running roughshod over the rights of others.

A person cannot morally take away the freedom of another without cause as, for example, when a father forces his teenage daughter into prostitution. A man cannot rightfully choose to become a slavemaster, kidnapping and imprisoning defenseless women.

Little can be said for the type of life lived by such persons. Likewise no justification can be made for violating the dignity of a person by experimenting on him with drugs without his knowledge and consent. Nor can one spread lies about a co-worker in order to advance one's own position. Nor violate the trust that others place in one, as for example, when a banker reveals confidential information that will result in harm to a client.

We should not ingest poisons into our bodies, nor accept the unnecessary pollution of the environment, nor put up with a careless attitude toward protecting people from accidental physical failures and the like, nor try to place the blame on others for our own failures.

A good person in the theist tradition should not be a pessimist, for pessimism is against the virtue of hope. There is good reason to think that pessimism gives rise to a destructive, self-fulfilling prophecy.

Some negative expressions, however, do not set down limits on our conduct, but, on the contrary, effectively enhance our freedom. I will consider them under the positive approach.

The positive approach to the good person. Whereas in the negative approach we have tried to say what the good person in the theist tradition should not do, in the positive approach we will try to set down the kinds of things that a good person should do. Many of these characteristics and actions are relevant to the way in which the good person should act when confronted by evil.

The good person is grateful for the good things that she can enjoy and is willing to accept a certain amount of tension and risk in distinguishing herself and accomplishing something of genuine worth. A good person takes on projects of true achievement and tries to realize her potentialities. She considers the information that modern science makes available to us, findings that influence our moral judgments as they prescribe how to care for our bodies as we fulfill a reasonable desire to preserve our life. She tries to enhance her freedom and increase the freedom

of others. She sees that an action done because it is right is more meritorious than one that is done because of a clear-cut immediate reward.

She views unfortunate occurrences, natural disasters, disease and the like as challenges to come forward and exhibit virtue, or as tests which show her who she really is. She believes that when great evils are unavoidable, they can be the occasion of significant advancement in courage, hope, devotion and the like, virtually a call to greatness.

The good person sees danger as a challenge to a higher kind of life, not that she always seeks it out, but that she is willing to stand firm when it confronts her. She is willing to venture out and test her limits, and to accept the consequences of failure. She realizes the value of a test and is willing to be put to it. She accepts the responsibility for her own failures. She tries to get rid of evils, and shape her destiny whenever possible, but she is willing to endure suffering when she cannot change things. She tries to change what she can change and accept what she cannot change.

She is not crushed by the need to suffer. She is willing to face up to her own death, to the time when she will have to leave all pleasures, friends, and earthly possessions.

A good person is not expected to do the impossible. He is free of any obligation to do what cannot be done. As we will see, this has a special place in the problem of God and evil, for we will claim that one cannot place an obligation on the Creator to bring about the impossible.

The good person at times in his dealings with good and evil makes a tragic mistake. We might have the right intentions and be morally right in a subjective way, but find out in the future that what we embraced as good has brought danger and suffering. Not that this always happens, but it happens frequently enough to present us with a serious problem when we try to evaluate something as good or evil in an absolute sense.

We should not be surprised, then, at Leibniz's remark that the good person should be slow to judge in the problem of evil, for he is trying to give answers to one of the most complex and difficult problems in human history.10 The good person, as any human being, should be humble in the face of such a problem where he obviously lacks considerable knowledge. Just as the good person sees the need for faith in his fellowman if he is to accomplish anything of value, so too he sees the reasonableness of faith in God, as he recalls the complexity of the world and the limited state of human knowledge.

The good person at times cannot avoid bringing about a genuine evil. A teacher at times allows his students to fail as he fulfills his responsibility to show them the ideal and how far they are from it. The high rates of failure in medical school are the result of measures taken to insure that incompetent doctors do not harm the public. The examiner who fails an airline pilot who is not physically fit or up to date on the plane he is flying brings about an evil, but he is doing his job, protecting us from greater evils.

The evils brought about are real. The failed medical student must make a serious re-adjustment of his goals and hopes. The grounded pilot must seek another way of making a living. This is another way of saying that the good man brings about evil from time to time because it is necessary. More important ends and obligations call for it, and he would not be called good if he did not do things that resulted in such consequences. We do not blame such persons for what they have done, even though they have caused disappointment, distress, financial difficulties and suffering. In the problem of God and evil, it is possible that suffering and even disasters are necessary for any number of reasons, some of which will appear in the rest of this work.

Does the supererogatory have a place in the problem? Must a good person be always obliged to do the best possible action at any moment? It seems that we act as if we are convinced of this. The sensitive person who tries to live an ideal human life seems to have a strong propensity to

continually question herself as to the value of any action--its usefulness in attaining that goal. We ordinarily think in terms of it being "better to do this than that," given our decided purpose. Someone who is trying to save money might wait for a sale day to buy a needed item, and then do other errands on that same trip. If she is equally talented in helping young people, in raising dogs, in making jewelry, and in growing roses, she might see helping young people as better and feel obliged to do it in her spare time, even though she is fulfilling all other obligations she has to society. She would be presupposing that the youth of her neighborhood have greater value than dogs or flowers. She might see the object of her efforts as having greater dignity and hence placing a demand on her.

However, such an obligation is questionable. It can be maintained that there are supererogatory actions, morally good actions not obligatory or forbidden--actions whose omission is not wrong, actions done voluntarily for the sake of someone else.11 David Heyd gives as illustrations a particularly generous contribution to a cause toward which we have only a limited responsibility, the anonymous, impersonal giving of blood at some sacrifice to oneself, and not insisting on one's rights as when someone grants a period of grace.12 Beauchamp and Childress in their *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*13 mention two cases which we might interpret as involving actions beyond duty: Werner Forssman performed the first heart catheterization on himself,14 and the French doctor, Daniel Zagury, injected himself with an experimental AIDS vaccine.15 It is difficult to see how such researchers would be obligated to test their developed discoveries in such a way. The authors also mention the way some nurses, after putting in a hard day, go back to the hospital to visit patients who need them, and the nurses who manifest exceptional patience or fortitude while on the job.16 From my own personal experience, my doctor friend who made an extra house call to calm the unwarranted fears of a worrisome caregiver, agreed that such an action was supererogatory and that it was not unusual for him to do such things. Tom Regan gives an interesting challenging example in which four persons injured in a racecar accident and in danger of losing an arm, or being paralyzed, etc., forego treatment in order that a racecar driver's life can be saved. The actions of the four are supererogatory, on the basis that those who voluntarily engage in high risk activity (racecar drivers) waive their right to attention, if the means used will appreciably harm others not voluntarily engaged in that action.17

A strong reason in defense of supererogatory actions is that, without them, human freedom would be significantly restricted to an unreasonable degree. That is, once a person fulfills her ordinary obligations to society, there should be circumstances in which she should be free to devote herself to whatever she wants to do. While it might be true that each of us should do much more to relieve the suffering of our neighbor, there should be a limit beyond which we should be able to choose to do so without any strings attached. Even though she knows that she has the talent to do wonderful things with youth, she wants to make jewelry. In some circumstances, she should be morally as well as physically free to do whatever she wants to do.

This means that, under certain circumstances, a good person can decide to putter in the garden or go to a ball game rather than help out at a Kiwanis auction. He can collect cars rather than raise dogs or feed the birds. If this is true, then any criticism of the Divinity for not having brought into existence the best possible world or even a better world would be seriously weakened. If God is a good person, then it is questionable whether he is obligated to actualize the best possible action.

Many of the above-mentioned characteristics of a good person have a part in the attempted solution to the problem of God and evil. In subsequent chapters, I will show more extensively how a good person deals with evil. In the chapter immediately following I will show how these

characteristics affect our understanding of how God can be called good. From there I proceed to attempt an understanding of omnipotence, the power of God.

Notes

1. A.C. Ewing. *The Definition of Good* (New York: Macmillan, 1947).
2. Mackie, *ibid*.
3. Royce, *ibid*.
4. Walhout, *ibid*.
5. Farrer, *ibid*.
6. Sontag, *ibid*.
7. Pittenger, *ibid*.
8. Buber, *ibid*.
9. Walhout, *ibid.*, Ch. 9.
10. G. Leibniz, "On the Ultimate Origination of Things," *The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, trans. Robert Latta (London: Oxford University Press, 1925) pp. 346-347.
11. Cf. David Heyd, *Supererogation--Its Status in Ethical Theory* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 115.
12. Heyd, pp. 146, 148, 152.
13. Thomas Beauchamp and James Childress, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics* 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 495.
14. Cf. Jay Katz, ed., *Experimentation with Human Beings* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1972), pp. 136-140. Beauchamp and Childress, p. 495.
15. Philip J. Hilts, "French Doctor Testing AIDS Vaccine on Himself," "Washington Post," March 10, 1987, p. A 7. Beauchamp and Childress, p. 495.
16. Beauchamp and Childress, p. 484.
17. Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), pp. 320-321.

Chapter IV
Good and the Good God

The problem of God and evil as it is discussed philosophically in the Western world is set against the background of a personal God who creates. Those who oppose the theist defense object that if you accept God as all powerful and all knowing, then God cannot be good, for he allows innocent people to suffer and, in general, he allows too much needless evil to occur in the world. If God is omnipotent, then he is malicious, depraved and cruel. He is not a good person. If we insist that he is good, then, in view of all the evil in the world, we must downgrade his power and/or knowledge. Either way, we have a powerful objection to the existence of the Judeo-Christian and Islamic God.

This position presupposes that the ontologically good God is also morally good as a person. If God were only ontologically good he would have everything that an ideal God should have, and we might conceive him as necessary, eternal, creator, omnipotent, omniscient, infinite and even, in a sense, the foundation of all morality. However, he would not be a person who could be blamed or praised for what he does.

The claim that God is a person is based on God as Creator, which implies that he is the source of every perfection. Personhood is a perfection, and hence it should be attributed somehow to God. Traditional theism presupposes that the essential notes of person are having intelligence and will. One objection to this view (which we will not consider here) understands "person" as necessarily implying a body. This, of course, would preclude calling a wholly spiritual God a person.

Another important objection to God as a person is the necessity of moral agency. A necessary condition of being a person is that one should be a true moral agent. The claim is made, then, if God is a person, he should be a true moral agent, with a free will enabling him to do moral evil as well as good.

If God would not have to be seen as a moral agent who could do good or evil, then the theist defense of God would be easier. One could then argue that the problem of evil is a pseudo-problem, for God could not be blamed for the evil that occurs in the world. If God were not a moral agent, we could not rightfully complain to God for whatever suffering we must undergo, nor could we call God cruel, a torturer of man, an unsympathetic tyrant who toys with man. The non-believer's objections to the existence of God, based on the presence of evil in the world, would be undercut.

Central to this issue is God's status as a transcendent being. If we take that seriously, we will be inclined to be very cautious in attributing moral actions and moral agency to him. For action which makes one a moral agent, is a category and God transcends all categories. Below we will consider some of the arguments that flow from this position and some of the replies that can be made. Of course, if God is a moral agent, then he could be blamed for creating a world with unnecessary evil in it and could be charged as not morally good or not all powerful.

1. One argument against the view that God is a moral agent who could do evil as well as good is that God as the Creator is the principle of being, the source of all beings.1 As such he is to be distinguished from all beings, and the only way to do this is to deny that he is a being. Since every moral agent is a being, and God is not a being, then God is not a moral agent. Transcending all categories as principle of being, God does not act by actualizing in the mode of one of the categories as a moral agent acts.

This is a strong objection which would place God beyond the problem of good and evil. However, the difficulty with it is that it removes God so far from creatures that we can say little about him. This would virtually put an end to a philosophy of God and would plunge us into mysticism.

It appears that, if we are to pursue a rational inquiry into who this God is whom some accept and others deny, we have no choice but to have recourse to analogy. If God transcends the categories, the terms that we apply to him have to be used analogically. For example, the freedom which we attribute to God is to be understood differently from our accustomed way of taking it. Rather than essentially being the opposite of necessary or the power to choose this or that, God's freedom is to be understood as what one has when an agent is in the presence of his proper goal. Freedom here could be considered as the avid involvement, possession and enjoyment of what is good for us. Even should we be determined, we are free when we do what we should be doing. We are free because our decision is seen as the right one. Something of what this freedom is can be seen when, in a moral matter we do what we are supposed to do, we are then free of the pangs of conscience, free of gnawing doubts of indecision, and undisturbed by the criticisms of others. In this sense of freedom one can be a moral agent and still not change. It can be said that this is the way the blessed in heaven are free. In this way, both God and the blessed in heaven are personal moral agents. God is free because he is always in the presence of himself, the only adequate object of his will. Perhaps in a similar way we should try to find an interpretation of 'person' that would allow us somehow to consider God as a moral agent.

2. Another argument against God as a moral agent follows from the idea of action which, of its essence, involves change. The traditional view is that God as the necessary being cannot change. If he were free to do evil then he would change, but since he cannot change, then he cannot do evil. Doing evil involves acting, moving from potency to act. If God is changeless and God as necessary being possesses his attributes necessarily, then he cannot be a true moral agent.

However, if we employ an analogous approach, this objection loses some of its force. God might be seen as having some characteristics of a moral agent. As indicated above, if we understand freedom in a different sense, one can be a free moral agent while being in the presence of one's proper good. In this way, one can be free and still not be exposed to the possibility of doing evil. In this way both God and the blessed could be considered here as personal moral agents, God being free because he is always in the presence of himself, the adequate object of his will. It follows from this that God cannot have obligations and duties,2 for having obligations presupposes being able to do something or refrain from doing something.

Concerning the matter of obligations, it is true that the moral principles whereby man ought to live cannot be readily applied to God; what we expect of a human moral agent we cannot automatically expect of God. Rebecca Penz has noted how God might be somewhat like a parent who tells her daughter that she is not to cross the street in front of her house alone.3 The parents lay down this rule to protect the value of an especially precious human life in a situation that is dangerous, and the child's actions are judged according to whether she obeys the rule. And yet, the parents themselves need not obey that rule in order to protect their own lives. There might be some instances wherein man would have to obey a rule, but the rule would not apply to God. It is not fitting that the criteria whereby God would be judged good be simply human. The adjustments could be far reaching.

One possible way of seeing God as necessarily good while not being bound by any duties and obligations is suggested by T. V. Morris who proposes a distinction between following a rule and

acting in accordance with a rule.4 While human beings are bound by moral duty, God, because of his distinctive nature as Creator, does not share our relation to moral principles. Still, God necessarily acts in accordance with those principles which would express moral duties in a human. Hence, we know that when God promises, he will do what he promises. If he communicates to us, he will be telling the truth. So, we can accept God as necessarily good, while not having to hold that he is bound by any duties himself.

We can also view analogously the "act of creation" as having something common to action. As the human agent is seen as being aware of alternatives, we can imagine God as having alternatives. We can conceive of him without creation, as existing without having created: Or, . . . as having created either this world or some other possible world even though he was determined only by his own goodness.

3. Another argument against God as a moral agent is that God as the source of morality does not have to be a person in order to be the source of moral good. Even though God cannot be called good in exactly the same way in which we would call our neighbor good, he could still be the source of morality. As Creator, God is seen as the source of all existence and perfection. As such he is the source of all truth, and, since truth as a perfection encompasses not only the speculative but also the practical, then God can be seen as the source of moral truth. God constitutes an intelligible foundation for right and wrong, a rational element determining the morality of an action. Since moral truth is a good, then God is the source of moral goodness.

Here God would be justified as the source of morality by appealing to his status as Creator, the source of all perfections. Although this does not function as a defense of his personhood, it has a certain relationship to the justification of God as a person. Since being a person is a perfection, then just as the ontologically good God would have to be the basis of the perfection of moral truth, so also he would have to be the ground of personhood. God as the source of all perfections would have to be eminently moral and personal.

4. The fourth reason why it is said that God cannot be a moral agent is that a moral agent can succeed or fail, but it makes no sense to speak of God in this way.5 In order to determine whether some agent is a success or failure, one needs a background against which to judge him. We judge a writer against the history of writing or a watchmaker against the history of watchmaking. God, as the Creator of the world out of nothing, cannot be judged against any standard. We have no previous knowledge of creations whereby we can measure his performance.

Although this argument has a certain power, other factors moderate its force. Analogously we could speak of him in a way somewhat similar to our evaluation of a creative person. What did he have to work with? Is what he has done admirable? Is there beauty and harmony in what he produced? Can we think of a better possible way of doing things? The criteria for our judgment are reason and possibility. When Hume objected that God botched the job of creation, Hume had in mind the possibility of a better world, which he claimed God should have created. We can at least consider the possibility. The inquirer can ask why God did not create a better world which appears possible, at least to the inquirer. If the universe is truly a botched job, then we can judge the Creator to have failed, to have produced a world which is unworthy of a good and all powerful God. Even though creation is a unique effect, it is still an effect which we can compare to some other possible effect which we can conceive of as within the powers of an all-powerful creator. We can conceive of apparently better worlds that God should have been able to actualize, and hence we can at least question whether his act of creation has been a failure. And, surely, we can

think of worlds worse than this one. The result of his creation, the whole fabric of creation as one unique effect, could be questioned as worthy or unworthy of a good God. In this way, it seems possible to talk in terms of whether God has failed, whether he has the right intentions, does the right actions. This is in effect to speak of him as a moral agent and hence, as a good or evil person.

What this all comes down to is that it is very difficult to deny to God any connection to moral agency. While God, as the cause of being, is transcendental and does not operate within the categories, as perfect he can be seen as the cause of moral truth and as having the perfections of intelligence and will which are the requirements of a person. And he could be seen as free in that he spontaneously embraces his proper good.

Perhaps a greater insight into the mystery of God's goodness can be attained by becoming aware of the strength of both approaches, the transcendental and the personal. Perhaps we should accept the distinctiveness of the transcendental God who is not a being and be willing to make modifications in our view of God as a moral agent and person. At the same time, we might be more accepting of a distinctive type of freedom which applies most appropriately to the Divinity.

We should not be surprised that thinkers down through the ages have discussed the problem of God and evil in the context of God as a person. It is not unexpected that we ask to what degree the Judeo-Christian God brings about good or inflicts or allows evil as do we humans who can accept or reject each other, who can help or harm, who can offer the most beautiful gifts or will the most horrible evils.

It is not unexpected, then, that we ask, "What do we mean when we say that God is a good person?" In an attempt at an answer, we will try to flesh out in more detail what we mean by this phrase. The good person is very close to us "we know who she/he is. She/he gives us a chance of understanding more accurately the meaning of "good." Indeed, the good (or evil) person is ourself" we recognize goodness when we consciously do what is right or others treat us with due concern. We know evil when we act against our principles or our conscience and harm someone, or when we suffer from a neighbor's insensitivity or injustice.

Here we shall draw on what appears in the theist tradition in answer to the many objections to the goodness and omnipotence of God in that tradition; the good person too will be seen in that context. (Possible objections might be that the good person should be an avid skeptic and have little room for faith in his life, that he should be a pessimist, an egoist, or a radical subjectivist in moral matters. I think there are good reasons for rejecting the above types of person, but I do not want to argue the point at this time.) By applying our idea of the good human person to the idea of God, we will try to make clearer what is meant by the good God who allows evil.

I will use the traditional positive (*via affirmativa*) and negative (*via negativa*) ways. The negative way will be twofold.

1. The first kind of negative approach prescribes that the attributes of the good person that imply imperfection must be denied of God. They are many: faith, gratitude, anxiety, humility, courage, a willingness to accept challenges and to increase in virtue . . . Although they are of limited value in the problem of God and evil, their consideration helps toward an understanding of the important differences between God and his creatures and a more accurate grasp of God's goodness.

The good person sees the reasonableness of faith as she recalls the complexity of the world and the limited state of human knowledge. She sees the need for faith in her fellowman and sees that an action done because it is right is worthy of greater merit than one that is done because of a clear-cut immediate reward. She sees that a person must exercise the virtue of faith in some way,

if she is freely to come to accept the existence of God. Faith, however, is one virtue that we do not expect to find in God. We do not say that God is good because he practices the virtue of faith or because he chooses to act without a desire for a reward. We call God good in this tradition because he acts according to his goodness.

Gratitude is another virtue that we should not expect to find in God, although we look for it in the good person. A good man or woman is grateful for the good things that he or she can enjoy. But God does not have to be grateful to anyone, for he is the source of all.

Nor does God have to accept a certain amount of tension and risk as he pursues a task of genuine worth, as we find experienced in the good, conscientious, hard-working person. While the human can fail or be harmed, neither of these can touch the all powerful God. He does not have to take on projects of achievement, for he is the fullness of existence and does not have to grow and perfect himself. God is the epitome of virtue and does not have to develop it.

The good person views unfortunate occurrences as opportunities to develop virtue, but we do not attribute such a characteristic to God. The good person sees natural disasters, disease and the like as an opportunity to practice courage, as a call to greatness. This kind of person believes that when great evils are unavoidable, they can be the occasion of a significant development of virtues such as courage, hope, devotion, faith. This person is not crushed by the need to suffer. Rather, she is willing to face up to her own death, to the time when she will have to leave all pleasures, friends, and earthly possessions. She realizes the value of a test and is willing to be put to it. Although she tries to free herself from evils and shape her destiny whenever possible, she is willing to endure suffering when she cannot change it. She tries to change what she can change and accept what she cannot change. God, however, cannot be harmed by unfortunate occurrences. He does not have to seize the opportunity to develop virtue. Nor do we call God good because he is willing to face up to his own death.

The good person is willing to venture out and test his limits, and to accept the consequences of failure. Here, again, God cannot test his limits, for he lacks limits and cannot be subject to them. Likewise, he does not fail in what he does, and, hence, does not have to accept the consequences of failure.

The good person sees danger as a challenge to a higher kind of life. Not that he always seeks it out, but that he is willing to stand firm when it confronts him. He can defend himself against an aggressor and fight to defend his freedom. But God is not subject to danger, and we do not call him good because of the way he stands up to it. We don't call God good because he defends himself against someone who might harm him. He is all powerful and this would be contradicted by the existence of someone who could harm him.

Due to the limitations of human knowledge, the good person should be humble and slow to judge when faced with great complex problems, but the good God does not have to have this characteristic. The omniscient God knows all that is to be known about the world and, hence, cannot be under the obligation to be slow to judge.

Nor does God try to preserve and enhance his own freedom as we would expect from a good person. In our context God is the epitome of freedom.

2. In the second use of the negative way, we say that God, like a good human person, is not obliged to do certain things. It is here that we have an idea that is at the heart of our problem. For example, a good person is not held to do the impossible. He is free from any obligation to do what cannot be done. As we do not expect a good person to do the impossible, neither should we expect God to do something which cannot be done.

Another characteristic denied of both the good person and God is pessimism. The good person is not a pessimist, one who is convinced that little goes right in the world and evil will never be overcome.

A third characteristic absent from both is extreme hedonism. The good person is spiritual; he rejects the kind of hedonism that advocates a life in which sense pleasure and the escape from physical pain are seen as the highest goods. Although denying characteristics of the good God is somewhat helpful in coming to some knowledge of his attributes, it leaves much to be desired with respect to an appreciation of the complexity and richness of the divinity.

The positive approach "positive expressions of how God is said to be good" is called for. In a positive vein, then; God, like the good person, has everything he should have. We have an idea of what God should be, an ideal God. Whatever we see that this God should have we attribute to him. In this sense knowledge, power, justice and all human perfections (in a purified way) should be found in him.

Four characteristics of the good person are eminently relevant to the problem of God and evil. In a positive approach, first, a good person from time to time allows or even brings about evil for a greater good; second, God can provide remarkable powers to his human creatures; third, God is the goal that all humans seek; fourth, negatively, a good person need not do the most perfect thing possible at any time.

God's goodness is not necessarily diminished by his allowing or indirectly bringing about a genuine evil from time to time. In the last chapter we noted how real but justified evils are brought about by good persons doing their duty. Examiners who fail medical students and airline pilots, and parents who discipline children cause suffering. We do not blame such persons for what they have done, even though they have caused disappointment, distress, financial difficulties and the like. So too, God might from time to time be the cause of an evil and still not be worthy of blame, and still be a good person.

Secondly, God can provide remarkable powers to his human creatures. Errol Harris claims that we know that God is good, we ascertain the greatness of his goodness by the human ability to overcome natural evils by means of a spiritual magnanimity and the human power to refine our morality.6 We call God good not merely because of the way he protects us or sends us good fortune.

He is good because he has given us the power to endure and rise above the dangers that confront us in the world. He is good because he allows us to participate in his generosity, his magnanimity. He has given us the power to become better persons. It's not that we deny the goodness of a person who listens to us and is the source of aid and comfort in time of need. Surely, God is this kind of good person; we are grateful to him, we respect and value him. It is rather that as Creator he has given us more. God is good because he has given us a power that surpasses our expectations, a power that we are tempted to call, in Jonathan Seagull fashion, infinite. It is a tremendous power that is there to help us attain peace and contentment, if we choose to use it.

Third, God as good "what all humans seek" is related to the possible eventual triumph of good over evil. A good human person has a magnetic quality about him which draws others to him. A truly moral person is someone whom we value and want to be with. So, surely, the God we seek has this characteristic. As the source of morality he draws us to him. In this regard, we might see one way in which God takes on a challenge: to draw free creatures to himself without forcing himself upon them.

Fourth, in a negative sense, if a good person is not obligated to do the best possible action at any time, then we can hardly demand that of the good God. God is not then obligated to create the

best possible world on the grounds that whatever he does has to be the best possible. At the end of the last chapter, we noted the difficulty in demanding that a good person always do whatever is the best possible action at any moment. We decided that the obligation is questionable, for it unduly restricts human freedom. Once a person fulfills her obligations to society, there should be circumstances in which she should be free to devote herself to whatever she wants to do. If, for example a person is equally talented in counselling young people, in raising dogs, in growing roses and in making jewelry, there should be circumstances in which she should be free to choose whichever endeavor she wants to engage in. A person should be allowed some domain of genuine freedom. This means that under certain circumstances a good person can decide to putter in the garden or go to a ball game rather than help out at a Kiwanis auction. He can collect cars rather than raise dogs or feed the birds. We have noted in the last chapter that there is good reason to think that there are supererogatory actions. Even if one rejected their existence, the rejection could be interpreted as ineffectual. For it could be argued that that the best possible thing for a person would be to be free to do what she/he wants to do in a certain situation. The obligation would be there, but would imply that following one's own desire is the best possible path. The best possible action would be to bring about the greatest value, but in a particular case that would be to follow one's own bliss.

This is one possible way of understanding the goodness of God with all its complexities. In sum, it is based on his nature as Creator of the universe—all that we have is owed to him. Creation can be seen as a manifestation of love, as when a person who loves tends to share whatever she has. As Creator, he allows us to participate in his being and thereby manifests the generosity that we see in the good person.

Notes

1. Cf. Brian Davies, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 22-24.

2. Davies, *ibid.*, p. 23.

3. Rebecca Penz, "Rules and Values and the Problem of Evil," *Sophia*, vol. 21, no. 2 (July, 1982), pp. 26-27.

4. Thomas V. Morris, "Duty and Divine Goodness," *The Concept of God,* ed. Thomas V. Morris (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 107-121; p. 117.

5. Davies, *Ibid.*, p. 24.

6. Errol E. Harris, "Atheism and Theism" *Tulane Studies in Philosophy*, vol. xxvi (1977), pp. 105-132; p. 120.

Chapter V
Power, Impossibility and the Omnipotence of God

In the traditional formulation of the problem of God and evil, great power--all power--omnipotence, is what we expect of God. If God were not omnipotent, then the evil that occurs in the world could not be blamed on God. This would be the case if God were unable to prevent evil, if for example, this were the best possible world. God's omnipotence could not be challenged if we could see how the evil in the world was necessary, that there would be no way to avoid it.

Why we expect God to be omnipotent is founded in our conception of God as perfect, God as having everything that it is better to have than not to have. Some feminists have suggested that this demand is misguided. They would prefer a fallible God who controls just so much and who struggles "toward an ethical vision." They claim that such a God would be more lovable and understandable to women, and hence we should frankly acknowledge that God is fallible and subject to error.1Process philosophers in a way limit God's power on the grounds that God cannot know the future, for the future does not exist. For them God's power is in his role as a persuader of free creatures, a final cause that attracts free beings to worthy goals.2 Alan Watts, writing in the Buddhist tradition, marks infinite power as a source of paralysis.3

What is it that we expect of God when we call him "omnipotent?"

Peter Geach and David Griffin are troubled by the very word "omnipotence." The process philosopher, Griffin, claims that omnipotence is ambiguous, meaning 1) having power over all, 2) having all the power, 3) having all the power it is possible for a being to have, or even meaning 4) being more powerful than anything else, or 5) having the power to overpower anything else.4 Geach would rather use "almighty" to express God''s power over all things (Griffin 1), God being more powerful than any creature (Griffin 4), God being the source of all power, and God not trying to do something and failing.5Rather than carrying out a formal critique of these authors, I will refer to their explanations from time to time.

Thomas Flint and Alfred Freddoso warn us of the need to talk in terms of an agent's power to actualize states of affairs, rather than in terms of an agent doing this or that logically possible task. The latter way of speaking would deny omnipotence to Smith, because he cannot say something that is at the same time being said only by Jones. But the state of affairs of Smith saying something being said only by Jones is logically impossible, and we would have no right in using it to influence the judgment of Smith's omnipotence. The state of affairs of Jones saying something said only by Jones, however, can be actualized by others and is not impossible.6

Both Geach and Griffin would agree that God's omnipotence is not such that he would be expected to bring about states of affairs expressed by any string of words, or by contradictions. Nor would God's omnipotence be such that he would be expected to be able to bring about anything that was intrinsically possible.

Absolute Power. One view is that the omnipotence of God should be such that he has the power to do anything and everything--absolutely. In this meaning of omnipotence, our ability to formulate a word or phrase would be sufficient to indicate something that the all-powerful being can bring into existence or endow with meaning. So, God would have to be able to make a round square, or to make a bachelor identical to a married man. As the all-powerful being God would be able to bring about even the kind of impossibility that is based in inconceivability.

God would have to be able to give meaning to gibberish, a syntactically incoherent combination of words, a nonsense syllable or expression. Gibberish differs from an explicit contradiction that has a distinct opposition between the words of the combination. In a married-bachelor or a square-circle contradiction the words are distinctly opposed. Married is the opposite of bachelor and square is opposed to circle. In gibberish the connection is vague and is founded not upon the meaning and the referent but on the connection that any words have to each other in a combination precisely because they are words.

One reason supporting this view, that God should be able to make real whatever can be formulated in language, is the possibility that the logic of the Infinite is much different from our own. How can we say that the Infinite God must follow our human logic? Could it not be that in him all contradictions are reconciled? Could it not be that we are dealing with the polarity of good and evil, ideas that remind us of the duality and opposition with which we as creatures have to work. If we take seriously the oneness of God, then in a definite sense God is beyond all contradictions, and even beyond good and evil. It appears that we must make some concession to this aspect of the Infinite God.

Another reason that might lead someone to claim that God should be able to actualize anything that can be formulated in language is the way in which a discussion that ends up in a contradiction points to something mysterious and elusive about the subject. Note the way in which physicists look upon light both as a particle and as a wave. If our attempt to explain God's nature should end up in a contradiction, that only points to his mysterious and inscrutable nature. In this view, we can reach his nature by way of mystical intuition.

A third reason is a conviction that limitation as such must be denied of God. To say that God could do the logically impossible is tantamount to saying that all limitation can be denied of God, that God can do anything or be anything, if he so desires. This view has a special attraction for fundamentalist type thinkers who would want God to have absolute power over anything and everything.

A fourth reason for thinking that God can bring about anything formulated in language is that in one way it solves the problem of evil. Evil is a problem for us only because of our limited knowledge. If God has unlimited power over all impossibilities and inconsistencies, then we need not worry about them in our explanation of the problem of evil, for God can overcome any and all contradictions. Although we might not be able to see through our inconsistencies, the all- powerful God who is not daunted by impossibilities would have the answer. The inconsistencies and contradictions in the problem would be just another class of impossibilities that the omnipotent God would surely overcome. We might not be able to spell out the answer to the problem, but we would know that there is an answer favorable to the good and all-powerful God, an answer that he would know. The impossibility that a good God produces evil, even without a reason, would be inconsequential. If God can do the impossible then he can reconcile any opposition between his goodness, his omnipotence and the existence of evil. As long as the critic sees the omnipotent God as being able to do anything, even the impossible, then the critic defeats himself. The impossibility of the existence of evil in a world created by a good and omnipotent God would be no real obstacle.

This view, that God should be able to bring about any and every state of affairs--absolutely, though attractive, is suspect and an oversimplification of the problem. On the surface, this position might be effective for a certain type of religious person who wants to defend God in the face of evil, but deep down it undermines all rational thinking of God. As far as we are concerned, the omnipotent God should not be expected to bring about any state of affairs--absolutely. This is so for two main reasons.

First, God, who is the source of all necessity, should not be expected to give real existence to whatever can be formulated in language. As far as we can tell, the words that express a nonsense phrase or a contradiction refer only to the reality of language as language. They refer to nothing real, to nothing beyond language. Ordinarily, when someone speaks incoherently to us we suspect an abnormality of some kind. We are inclined to think that the person is not himself and needs help. Incoherence and nonsense in a plan or proposal is a strong signal that we should deny approval.

From a philosophical point of view, if we say that no limitation at all can be applied to God, this would mean that God would be indeterminate, that he could be identified with his creatures and anything we can think of. Such a truly radical idea would undermine the entire philosophy of God. Although to speak of God in this way would be demeaning, it would be proper and hardly derogatory to speak of God as determinate, as e.g. the Maker and not the made. As A. Boyce Gibson has said, all limitation cannot be denied of God. We have to admit that God is God and not his creatures. To say that God is his creatures is to say nothing.7 There is a sense in which we are forced to say that the Infinite God cannot be absolutely unlimited.

If for us the contradictory has no distinct referent in reality, then we have no grounds for demanding that God should be able to bring it about. It is difficult to see why we should demand that God be able to do "what in itself cannot be done," as far as we can tell. We do not expect that one of our fellow creatures be able to do something that is described as "nothing." We do not hold it against our neighbor if he cannot bring into existence a contradiction which, in itself, does not allow the instantiation of something real.

To demand that God bring about the referent of nothing goes against reason. If we should expect God to bring about anything--absolutely--we expect God to violate the rule that requires every rational thinker to strive for consistency. And we have no choice here. No matter where one is working--in the physical or social sciences, or in philosophy--one cannot be satisfied with results that end up in contradictions. If we claimed that God could do the logically impossible, then we would be giving the logically impossible an undeserved respect and status. We would thereby undermine the rational endeavor to build up a knowledge of reality. The view of reason is that a contradiction cannot have a real distinct referent. It does not definitely refer to some reality beyond language before a distinction is made.

Attributing real existence to whatever can be formulated in language leads us beyond philosophy and into mysticism. The mystic uses contradictory and inconsistent explanations in the attempt to convey an intuition that cannot be articulated. After having a mystical intuition of God, Thomas Aquinas remarked that all the theology he had written seemed like straw. In this endeavor, if we stay with our conceptual approach and our logic, the chances are that we will be effectively silenced.

Silence, perhaps, is all for the good and in order here, for this epitome of the negative way in which words and concepts are acknowledged as expressing the Infinite God with woeful inadequacy is the next step in our search for insight into reality. We know that language and concepts are not ultimate in our effort to find reality--there is always a part of it that we know but cannot express in words. The frustrating experience of speaking of God in contradictory ways that lead to the silence of the mystics is similar to the stimulation of the Zen approach. It is not inconceivable that absurdities, such as God being able to make another God or God having the power to destroy himself, function as the Zen sound of one hand clapping or the visage of your face before you were born. Hopefully, the result will be a Zen "higher affirmation" and a realization of distinctions that will lead us to a deeper understanding of the Divinity.

The infinite power of the creator God is more properly expressed in his ability to make such distinctions that escape us, not in instantiating a type of negative concept. This appears also to be the proper role for the mystical.

A second difficulty with the demand that God bring about anything absolutely arises from morality. The great German philosopher, Gottfried Leibniz, objects that, if God were able to bring about anything, it would be wholly arbitrary that virtue is virtue and vice, vice. We would have to say that God does not act in a reasonable way, but merely according to whim. God could arbitrarily decide that hating him would be good and loving him evil. It would be a matter of indifference whether one saved or murdered a man. If God commanded blasphemy, i.e. the recognition that he is not God, then blasphemy would be good. Virtue could be vice, and justice could be injustice. And we would be bound to praise God for what he has decreed. Leibniz, appalled by such possibilities, complains that in such a state of affairs to say virtue is good only because God wills it so is like saying that proportion and harmony are thought to be good in music, because one has arbitrarily decided to sing or play an instrument in this or that way.8

From the philosophical point of view, we cannot accept that God's omnipotence extends absolutely to anything at all, to the contradictory, to the inconceivable. God should not be expected to be able to do anything that can be expressed in language and be marked less than powerful for not bringing it about.

Contradictions. Contradictions are at the root of the many things God should not be expected to bring about. They show us what we cannot use to express God's omnipotence. Some of them have a universal aspect, insofar as there is good reason for thinking that they can be recognized in any cultural paradigm found in our universe. The impossibilities of a married bachelor and a square circle, for example, have a special relationship to events and processes that are found in any culture. The possibilities and impossibilities arise from the cultural universals such as birth and death, the influence of the weather, health and illness, friendship and its loss, and a special relation between a human being and his/her mother or surrogate. All humans have these experiences. As we move from culture to culture, the impossibilities that are rooted in such experiences do not disappear, even though they might not be expressed in the same language or in what is ordinarily thought to be language. We might be dealing with some very basic realities of the universe that can escape the perception of a culture whose language is not ready for them. That the linguistic and cultural framework is not totally hostile or unreceptive to such impossibilities can be seen from the fact that we can readily move from one culture to another, learn and express somehow various impossibilities hitherto unrealized there, and teach others.

One type of contradiction is relatively simple. It is grounded in the way a nature of a being is destroyed by its opposite, non-being. Hence, making one and the same thing to be and not be is impossible. These contradictories cannot exist simultaneously. Since a negation is the contradictory of an affirmation, it is impossible that both of these are true at the same time.9

Other examples are: that something is identical to itself and not identical, that something is not something or other, that something is both a prime number and something else.10 Traditionally, philosophers have recognized the impossibility of making something that is not itself. Trying to do so would strike at the heart of the thing concerned. If one makes something, that something is presumed to exist at some time. To say that it is not itself, that it is not what it is, is repugnant to the mind, and inconceivable. Philosophers have likewise acknowledged that it is a contradiction to identify the contingent with the necessary, the absolute with the relative, the dependent with the independent, and the stable with the changing.

When we speak of a "bachelor," we must predicate "unmarried" of him. Although "married" and "bachelor" have meaning in themselves (as do "square" and "circle"), the attempt to put them together as a referring expression must fail. "For the past not to have existed" is another of these ideas. The very meaning of one of the terms, "past," is the opposite of "not to have existed." If we recognize the existence of the past (as we find in the example), then for it not to have existed is impossible.

The question as to whether God can make another God equal to himself involves the above kind of impossibility. In this medieval question, what is made must be in potency in some way, since it receives its existence from another. But, since it receives its existence from another, it cannot be in pure act, and pure act is proper to God. We can take the "made" other God as an infinite effect, but this infinite effect is in itself a contradiction. The very meaning of "effect" involves dependence upon a cause, and this would give it the status of a possibility that could receive existence. An infinite being, however, cannot be dependent on anything, is one, and cannot be a composed being. Hence, an infinite effect would be a contradiction.

Whatever is made by or dependent on another cause cannot be God, for God is understood here as the first cause who is made by no other. He is the wholly independent being. What is made by God "equal to himself" is not really equal to himself for it is made, an effect. It is dependent upon him and yet as equal would be independent. The trouble lies in the incompatibility of the terms "infinite" and "effect." Note how it is sometimes said that it is impossible to make the best possible world, if we take "world" as an effect and "best possible" as "the infinite being."

Another state of affairs that God cannot bring about is to make something lack one or more of its essential principles and still allow it to be what it is. The medievals would say that God cannot make a man to exist without a soul and still exist as a man, that he cannot see to it that a genus is not predicable of its species, and that he cannot make the radii of a circle unequal.11 Also, he cannot create a being with consciousness as an essential attribute and then take consciousness away from the creature or control that consciousness.12 God could annihilate man, but he could not permanently deprive him of consciousness and still allow him to exist. Although God can create a being with consciousness as an essential attribute, he cannot endow such an already existing being with the attribute. In its first act or instance of existing such a being necessarily has the power of consciousness.

God cannot make a triangular figure that is unbounded, for "an unbounded figure bounded by three lines" is a contradiction; nor can God make an "unextended red thing," for to be red and to lack width and length is a contradiction. Nor . . . a cube with less than eight edges. The "possible world" in which they would hold would of necessity have a material basis, and in the case of the red thing, one with color. In an Aristotelian context, the triangle, the cube and the circle would also require a material world since we have to deal with lines as well as (in the cube and the circle) numbers.

The all powerful God should not be expected to bring about actions such as those mentioned by Richard Swinburne that can be performed only by beings of a certain kind: getting divorced can be performed only by married persons, committing adultery can be done only by a married person, and sitting down can be performed only by a being with a body.13

Suppositions. Impossibilities for God arising from contradictions are not the only kind that should concern us here. Philosophers in the past spoke about another kind of impossibility when they said that Socrates could not sit and stand at the same time. It is based on a supposition that a possibility is actualized. Aquinas said that if we suppose that one is sitting, then he cannot be

walking.14 When something occurs it gives rise to an impossibility. Contingency and possibility might have preceded the entity or event, but, granted that the entity or event comes into existence, then it is impossible that its contradictory occur at the same time. In the traditional theist view, although this world or that world is not necessary in itself, once God wills that our particular universe come into existence, then it is impossible that God wills another world to be in its stead. This is not to say that our universe cannot be destroyed and be succeeded by another world or that God cannot create other worlds. It is to say that a certain impossibility exists which prevents God from changing his mind. This is one of the ways in which God is said to be necessary.

It appears that the impossibility of restoring virginity to a person who lost it has something of this character. Keeping and losing virginity involves a temporal sequence. If God sees everything in an instant (atemporally) and grasps the priority of possessing virginity to losing it, then having it restored is irrelevant. The loss of virginity is marked by its instant in a way similar to Socrates sitting at this moment. Though both are contingent events, both give rise to a necessity. Once viginity is lost, it cannot be restored, just as supposing Socrates is sitting at this instant, he cannot be standing at the same instant. The presupposition of turning time back appears to be founded on the basis of real possibility.

Possibles. In the above views we can see that there are some worlds which God is not expected to bring about. If God is not expected to bring about the impossible, then we have no grounds for blaming him if he does not do so. We must then bring our concept of God's omnipotence in line with such findings. One distinction that plays a central role in a better understanding of what we should expect of God is that between the possible as conceivable and the possible as real.

The possible as conceivable. This is often called the intrinsically possible or the logically possible. It is possible because in it we see no contradiction. But I believe there is more to it than that. What can be seen as not contradictory in itself can lead to a contradiction.

The possible in itself and what leads to a contradiction are rooted in contexts, in theoretical frameworks, some of which are more complex than others. What is impossible in a system depends on the laws of the system. Which system we are in does not matter as long as we judge the impossibilities from the principles and complexities of that order. This kind of possibility has to be considered in a particular world, its conceivability depending on whatever laws apply in that world.

In a science fiction world, for example, there might be no humans and, hence, no contradictions such as the married bachelor. A world without matter would contain no circle or square, and no time. In a science fiction world with different natural laws, what we let go from our hand might go up, not down. Ice might not cool, and the sun might not heat. The trouble with considering such worlds is that what appears as merely conceivable might not be actualized, or upon further insight it might lead to a contradiction. We might not be able to imagine a world in which the conceivable exists without such difficulties, or to imagine it at all.

It seems quite clear that, speaking absolutely, God can bring about such conceivable worlds. While it is true that in the traditional theist view our own world is the world that God has chosen, we do not know how long our world will exist. There is nothing preventing God from annihilating this world and bringing into existence one of those other worlds. His power extends to them. Whether or not he should actualize one or other of them is an interesting question. Certainly, we would not opt for one in which humans did not exist.

In dealing with what states of affairs can be actualized, the judgment as to the impossibility involved depends on the kind of being with which we are concerned. We have already noted Swinburne's reminder that getting divorced can only be done by married persons, that in an adulterous relation one person has to be married, that sitting down can be done only by a being with a body.15

In a similar fashion, what is impossible for God to bring about must be taken in God's context. This is the basis for the claim that God could have created a world other than the present world without bringing about a state of affairs that would lead to a contradiction. According to Aquinas, the reason is that the natural end of God's will is his goodness, and this end alone necessitates his will.16 God could not create anything as the adequate object of his will. No creature, however great, no kind of created world, could satisfy God's will. If God could create only this world, then we would be equating this world with his goodness--we would be identifying uncreated goodness with created goodness, a contradiction. Creation, or a creature, would be both dependent on God as any creature must be, and also, as divine goodness, independent. This is why, absolutely speaking, God could have created a world other than our own.

The real possible. The real possible is that which is defined in relation to this world and its laws and regularities. The impossibilities arising from our present world are based on the present natural laws, that set of regularities that are not merely conceivable but actual. The impossible here is something that goes against those laws, e.g. ten-legged dogs and money trees.17 A perpetual motion machine is impossible if we accept the law of thermodynamics. Life on a silicon base is not impossible because it is within the realm of physical and biological theory. Restoring virginity to someone who has lost it is a question of real possibility and impossibility. That it cannot be done is based on the impossibility of turning time back, a long held view which still prevails, notwithstanding the various scientific speculations which, as yet, lack acceptance by the scientific community. So we have 1) what is impossible, because it goes against the laws of our world, and 2) what is possible, because it is in accordance with them.

Here it must be noted that there is a way in which anything we conceive is based in this world out of all conceivable worlds. All our concepts arise from our existence in this world. We can talk of possible worlds only insofar as we can project them from our knowledge of this world. If we change the laws and articulate a science fiction world, whatever concepts we develop still have roots in our own world. Hence, there is good reason to think that a special status is to be given to what can be conceived and what leads to a contradiction in the present world, to what goes against the present laws of the universe as we know them.

Many critics of the good and omnipotent God ignore the importance of the distinction between the possible as conceivable and the possible as real; they thereby muddy the waters of omnipotence. They propose aspects of a system different from the present one, as they discuss the improvements God should have made in the world. They ask that God create a world in which humans do no evil, that God perform more miracles to do away with evils, that God give humans a stronger propensity to virtue, that God warn us of pending disasters. They ask that man not have to struggle for his knowledge and not have to suffer excruciating pain at times . . . that man be able to develop virtue and appreciate the good without suffering. Such changes involve profound modifications in the world as we know it.

Can God produce such modifications? It seems so, for the only states of affairs that he cannot bring about are what involve a contradiction or presuppositions. Surely, God could have made a world without human beings--there is no necessary connection between humans and existence.

God could have created a world with human-like creatures who were not free. But who would opt for a world without humans or one in which we were not free?

There is also a sense in which God should be able to do what is impossible in the light of the present natural laws. By operating according to a law, element, or relation hitherto unrecognized by us, he could bring about what appears to us to lead to a contradiction. We might call such events miracles. And although God should be able to do whatever is in accordance with the laws of our own world, this does not mean that he must do so.

The proposed changed worlds that the objectors ask for appear at first to be in accord with the laws of the present world, although the changes are so far-reaching that at times one suspects that they belong to a merely conceivable, science fiction world. We will see some of them in the following chapters. The problem lies in the elaboration of such worlds. It is not sufficient to advocate a change without laying out in detail the consequences for other entities in the system. David Griffin thinks that a "thirst-quenching, non-drowning substance" is not contradictory and, hence, is something we might expect the traditional God to be able to bring about. And yet, he says that we probably cannot imagine it.18 I cannot see how things which probably cannot even be imagined, let alone articulated in a system, can carry much weight in the problematic. Such proposed changes might easily lead to extremely complex modifications and contradictions. It is also an open question whether the world that results is definitely better than our own world. Too much is left unsaid. We will discuss such difficulties at greater length in Chapters Seven through Ten.

We grant that God should be able to bring about a kind of "impossible" by operating according to a law or relation hitherto unknown to man, or that he should be able to bring about something that requires an enhanced character of what already exists. We claim, however, that even if this is so, he would not have an obligation to do so and we would have no grounds to blame him if he did not do so. For we would be demanding that God do something which is beyond the capacity of nature as we know it. That he would do that should be gratuitous and not because of any obligation.

Here we will comment on seven different aspects or modifications to the meaning of God's omnipotence.

1. Alvin Plantinga's "Free Will Defense" has characteristics that involve both presupposition and gratuity.19 In Plantinga's view there is a certain kind of world that God cannot create. On the supposition that God created man with the present degree of freedom, God's power to actualize this or that world depends upon what man chooses in a particular situation. Hence, there is a sense in which it is true to say that God cannot bring about any and every possible world at all. If we presuppose that a human is truly free, then it is impossible that God see to it, for example, that his creature eat oatmeal or reject it on a particular morning. In such a state of affairs, we have something that God cannot do and should not be blamed or praised for allowing it.

In the context of moral evil, according to Plantinga, God could not create a world in which a person chose to accept a bribe and yet always did the right thing. This means that it is also possible that in any and every world of free beings God would actualize, there would be one or more persons who would do one or more evil actions. A person, indeed, everybody, might suffer from "transworld depravity." Hence, it is possible that God cannot actualize a world in which truly free creatures do only what is morally good. It is also possible that God cannot actualize a world in which there is less moral evil than in our own world, and the same amount of good. If humans are truly free, then it would be wholly up to man to determine whether he/she does what is right or

what is wrong. The state of affairs which God can bring about, his omnipotence, is conditioned by human decisions.

Plantinga's position must be understood within the context of God's power to give a creature something it does not require in virtue of what it is. It is conceivable that God see to it that a human never do anything wrong in her life by taking away her free will. But this would take away her status as a human being. It is also conceivable that he could preserve her freedom as he influenced her with special divine help. In such a case, God's help would be a gift, something to which she really had no right. Although it is conceivable that God should help everyone in this way, this would be likewise gratuitous and make it more difficult to appreciate the value of good actions done at a sacrifice.

2. Antony Flew20 claims that God could have created a world similar to the above in which humans are free and tempted but would do no moral evil. God could have arranged things so that man is truly free and always chooses what is right. As we have seen above, contrary to Flew, the possibility of a world in which human beings never do anything morally wrong should not allow us to place an obligation on God to bring it about. Being protected from sin is not something that is due to a person in virtue of his nature. Rather, it is something added to what one can expect as human. Flew is asking that God give humans something that goes beyond what they are.

Indeed, it is conceivable that man be tempted, yet not sin. It is conceivable that God could have made a world in which human beings were free and did not sin. In a way this would be really possible, in accord with what we know of the present world, if we accept the existence of saints. In another way, this would be really possible in a special sense, for a saint is such only because she has received something beyond her nature, a special grace or gift from God. Such a world would be one in which man as we know him would not exist. A profoundly different human being would walk this earth, a person of greater dignity.

The problem with this kind of world arises from the characteristics that are beyond what we expect of humans, the things that we might be but are not, the possible worlds that we can conceive--these cannot be the basis of a demand that anyone, including God, bring them into existence. We would have a reason to complain to God for not giving us something that we expect as a human, e.g. eyes that see or legs that allow us to walk: Or . . . if God, without reason, permanently took away our freedom or our consciousness. However, it is really unjust to fault him for not freely giving us something to which we have no right. There is no basis for the claim that man has a right to whatever is conceivable, and that we should call God less than good or less than all powerful if he does not bring it about. Those who demand that God give humans whatever is conceivable are off the mark.

Other instances in which God would give us something we did not deserve in virtue of our nature as humans would be his seeing to it that we never die, or that we are able to fly. If he did so, in effect he would be bestowing upon us a new status. Immortality would be an elevation to a new level of existence, and being able to fly like a bird would make humans into something beyond what they are. Surely, the claim that God should have created man with a greater inclination to resist temptation is in this class.

Indeed, it is conceivable that man be tempted and not sin, but this conceivability does not give rise to an obligation on the part of the Creator. We have no right to call God less than good or less than omnipotent if he does not protect us in this way. Just as we cannot rightfully ask that God create a world in which we never die, or a world in which we can flap our arms and fly, so, too, we cannot demand that he preserve us from sin.

At the heart of this question is God's freedom, that perfection which the Creator should have. God should be able freely to give or deny something without conforming to any obligation to do so. If we accept the basis of God's action as his goodness which alone necessitates his will, then nothing other than God's goodness can be a criterion for judging any of his actions. That is, we cannot judge the Creator by the worlds that he could have produced but did not. We cannot call him less than good because he has not made humans with a stronger bias toward good or a better knowledge of himself.

We are dealing here with the distinction between the order of nature and the order of grace. If we insist that God was obliged to give what religious people call the gift of grace, then we destroy its nature as a gift. How can it be a gift if it had to be given? What God gives is his to give or not to give. It is actualized at God's will, accordingly as God freely chooses to do so or not. Nobody can demand that God actualize such a possibility under penalty of being called less than all powerful or less than all good.

The point is that the perfect God should have the perfection of being able to genuinely give something, that is, to give it of his own free will. This precludes his being obliged to do so. To obligate God to give us something that is not due us would make it impossible for him to give something merely because he wanted to give it. If we claim that he is not good or not powerful because he did not give it, then we effectively deny that perfection to him.

In answer to the question, "Could God have made a world of men who did not sin?" we have to answer, "Yes." And yet, we cannot rightfully call God less than good or less than omnipotent if he does not do so. We cannot say that God is not good because although he could have given each of us a special power to avoid doing any evil action, he did not do so. What God can do in the order of grace is conceivable, but in no way can be the foundation of an obligation.

3. A kind of non-absolute divine omnipotence is taught by the process philosopher, David Griffin, who denies that every intrinsically possible state of affairs can be brought about unilaterally by an omnipotent being.21 For Griffin, "bringing about" involves action which implies actual beings that are acted upon. The omnipotent God cannot control the evil in the world because what happens in the world is partly due to the worldly entities themselves that are underived from any other being.22 For Griffin, God as omnipotent has all the power that it is possible for one being to have but this means that he does not have all the power23 --for God does not create out of absolute nothingness.

Griffin claims that creatures act according to their nature in such a way that God cannot control them. Actual beings have power. God, then, does not have all the power--he has all the power it is possible to have. It is impossible that any being have a monopoly on power.24 That God control any creature is an impossibility that he should not be expected to bring about.

For Griffin, God influences the world with a causality that is persuasive, not coercive or controlling.25 Controlling power totally determines the effect, while persuasive power allows a certain amount of self-determination on the part of the effect.26 God cannot have controlling power, because he is not one finite localized agent with a body among us. While we creatures can control and coerce others because we have bodies between us and the rest of the world, God cannot exert controlling efficient causation.27

We do not accept Griffin's "independent" entities nor his rejection of the traditional creation. However, our own view agrees with the non-absolute character of Plantinga's and Griffin's views. We propose here a traditional theist variation which would have the complex and multivariant nature of the world justified by its contribution to our knowledge of the divinity. God created the

many different creatures in the world, each with its own nature, to manifest the infinite richness of his being and to give humans a better means of getting some idea of it. Our true goal is to gain an insight into the divine being, the mystery of all mysteries, as we live together with all other entities of the world. This means that humans are not absolutely the highest beings in existence. God allows the entities of the world to function according to their natures. The various creatures that might harm us have, then, a kind of right to exist and act according to their nature, and it is not unusual that we suffer evil when we cross their paths.

4. It is sometimes asked whether God can sin. If we accept the views that having absolute power is impossible, that possibility has to be understood here relative to the beings with which we are concerned, and if we agree that the natural end of God's will is his goodness, then there is no reason to think that God can sin. This, I believe, would answer Peter Geach's difficulty with ascribing omnipotence to a being who could not lie or break his word or do anything evil.28 Before we talk about the power to be expected of a being, we have to consider what kind of being it is. We must talk in terms of limited natures and natural limitations, God being "limited" in that he is not to be confused with everything else. It is, then, not unlikely that we consider his power in relation to his goodness. If his goodness alone can move his will, then it is impossible that he sin.

5. Can God make something that he cannot destroy? We know that it is logically possible that a human make something that he cannot destroy. For God, however, this would be another impossibility that would not lessen his omnipotence. Any created being receives its existence from God who at any time can withdraw it and annihilate the creature. To say that God could never destroy a creature would be to say that the creature had existence in its own right (independent existence), and existence not in its own right (dependent existence)--existence due to God--at the same time. This would be a contradiction. A similar kind of argument can be used to show that it is impossible for God to make something too heavy for him to lift. Such a creature would then be greater than God and, as a creature dependent on him, it would be less than God: Again . . . a contradiction. Or, it could be seen as a contradiction because the Creator would see to it that the object had dependent existence and independent existence at the same time. In the strange request of the spiritual God lifting something or moving a material object from place to place, we could conceive of him removing existence from it in one place and giving it existence in another. In this sense a thing that God could not lift would be a contradiction.

6. Could God bring about a world in which 'humans' were not free but were mere automotons? We do not see anything preventing God from having the power to bring about a world wherein everything, including man, is rigidly determined. In such a universe, it would be impossible for humans to do anything other than what they do. It would be a world in which there is no freedom, a world in which whatever happens, happens necessarily, and what does not happen is impossible.

If the world were so determined, then the evil that men do to their fellowmen would not be really attributable to them, but is to be blamed on God who set up the rigid system of cause and effect. Of course, in such a world it would be questionable whether humans were really humans--rather, we would be more like robots without responsibility, definitely a lesser kind of being. Although we cannot prove that our universe is so determined, nor that our projects are to proceed in such a way, we still see that God the Creator could bring about such a world.

7. All of this supposes that God has a special comprehensive knowledge which gives him power over the epistemic impossibility that limits human knowledge. Epistemic impossibility arises from man's inability to know some things that are theoretically knowable, e.g. the number of snowflakes that fall in a storm, which, though knowable in itself, is beyond the known epistemic powers of humans. However, nothing is noetically impossible for God. We do not accept the view of the process philosophers who claim that God cannot know the future because the future does not exist.

Since God knows everything, he can know what appears as an exception to the laws of nature. God could know a particular refinement of a law of nature or even another law of nature that is as yet unknown to humans. This can be considered the basis of a special power over the order of nature which allows him to bring about what we ordinarily call miracles.

In the above pages, we have noted a number of things that God cannot do and is not expected to do, and hence should not be blamed for not doing. We believe that their metaphysical basis is sound.

Where does this leave us? What is the meaning of God's power? How is God omnipotent? A possible answer follows:

God ought not to be expected to bring about any state of affairs whatsoever, such as contradictions and the meaningless, or a purely arbitrary morality.

God can withdraw his existence from this world and bring about what we would call a science fiction world with laws markedly different from our present laws.

God as Creator of the world has set the order of the world. He has decided to create this world rather than some other. He can preserve the world or annihilate it and bring into existence a world other than our own.

God could have brought about 'humans' who had no freedom, who were creatures subject to a rigid determinism.

God's power presupposes a profound knowledge of the future.

God can draw creatures to himself as the ideal, the good, the perfect.

God has the power to give us a true gift, something that goes beyond what we have and expect as humans. This is sometimes expressed as the power to raise man above his nature. Among these gifts which God can but need not bestow are the strengthening of a person in virtue, the protection of a person from doing anything morally wrong, the guarantee of our existence after death, the enlightenment of humans by a special revelation.

The meaning of God's power to overcome evil is a challenge. It seems to depend upon the willingness of humans to commit themselves by reason and faith to seek out and bring about all that is good and true.

In the next chapter we will consider the power of God to bring about the best possible world.

Notes

1. Nel Noddings, *Women and Evil* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 24-25.

2. David Griffin, *Evil Revisited--Responses and Reconsiderations* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 100, 156.

3. Alan Watts, *Nature, Man, and Woman* (New York: Vintage, 1970), p. 43.

4. David Griffin, *Evil Revisited*, p. 55.

5. Peter Geach, *Providence and Evil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 3-5.

6. Thomas Flint and Alfred Freddoso, "Maximal Power," *The Existence and Nature of God*, ed. Alfred Freddoso (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), p. 84.

7. "Two Strands in Natural Theology," *Process and Divinity*, ed. Wm. Reese and Eugene Freeman (La Salle, Ill. Open Court, 1964), p. 486.

8. Leibniz, *Theodicy,Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil*, ed. A. Farrer, trans. E. M. Huggard (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951), par. 176, 181-183. pp. 236-237, 240-241.

9. Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, trans. James Anderson (Garden City: Doubleday, 1956), II, 25.

10. Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1964), pp. 60-61.

11. Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, II, 25.

12. Cf. E.J. Khamara, "In Defense of Omnipotence," *The Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 20, no. 112 (July, 1978), pp. 215-228.

13. Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 150.

14. Thomas Aquinas, *De potentia, Quaestiones disputatae*, cura P. Bazzi et. al. (Taurini: Marietti, 1949), vol. II, q. 1, art. 5, c.

15. Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism*, p. 150.

16. Aquinas, *De potentia*, q. 1, art. 5, c.

17. William McMahon, "The Problem of Evil, and the Possibility of a Better World," *J. of Value Inquiry*, vol. 25 (1969), pp. 81-90. Pp. 86-87.

18. Griffin, *Evil Revisited*, p. 91.

19. Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), pp. 43-57.

20. Cf. Antony Flew, "Divine Omnipotence and Human Freedom," *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*, ed. A. Flew and A. MacIntyre (london: SCM Press, 1955), pp. 144-169.

21. David Ray Griffin, p. 59.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

23. *Ibid.*

24. Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), p. 268.

25. Griffin, *Evil Revisited*, p. 99.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 103.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 104.

28. Cf. Peter Geach, *Providence and Evil*, p. 15.

Chapter VI
Must God Create the Best Possible World?

One of the claims of those who object to the goodness and omnipotence of God is that he should have brought into existence the best possible world--which obviously he has not done.

Insofar as some thinkers might claim that it would be better if there were no world at all, it is fitting here straightaway to distinguish between the best possible state of affairs and a best possible world. An objector might say that we would have a best possible state of affairs or a best possible reality if a good God decided not to create any world at all.1 The best possible state of affairs would preclude not only a best possible world but also any world, and we would be contradicting ourselves if we called it the best possible. If God is truly free, then he not only had the option of creating a world with evil or without it, but also had the further choice of not creating at all. If God chose not to create, then he would still be powerful, free, and still be the highest good.

This argument has an odd Jacob's ladder character: human creatures using creation to prove that creation should not have been. We who are part of the created world get our concepts from the existence of our world only to show that such a world or any world at all should not have existed. Humans learn what goodness is from the good in the world, but conclude that an all good God should not have brought that good into existence. This position has the peculiar devastating implication that man never should exist. But if it is better that humans never exist, then it is better that the advocate of the objection never exist, and better that the argument never be made. Any human argument that advocates the non-existence of all human argument cannot be taken seriously. The philosopher who would transcend his status as a human thinker and claim that it were better if human reasoning never existed would be using human reason to destroy that to which he is committed. This objection to the goodness of God is, then, self-defeating.

Of course, we cannot get out of our own skin, and only the misanthrope would claim that it would be better if human beings were never created. Notwithstanding those who claim that man is a cancer on the world, or who say that it would be better if they had never been born, most of us consider ourselves fortunate for having been given life. We gratefully accept existence and cannot see the sense in opting for a world without it.

Concerning the best possible world three questions can be asked: 1) Is the best possible world a contradiction? 2) Is the present world the best possible world? 3) Should the good and all-powerful God have brought into existence the best possible world?

1) The best possible world, understood as "a perfection that cannot be surpassed," is ambiguous at best and a contradiction at worst. This can be taken as "the best state of affairs" or "the best reality," both expressions that can be applied in our context to the uncreated Creator. If we take the best possible as implying "uncreated being," and the world as "the created," the best possible world would mean something created and uncreated, a clear contradiction.

We are in a similar bind if we take "best possible" as the epitome of perfection, or absolute perfection. This would be considered as infinite perfection and as such necessarily at an "infinite metaphysical distance" from whatever is finite. In this sense, the best possible world would be infinitely perfect. As created the world would have to be finite, but as the epitome of perfection it would have to be infinite--again a contradiction.

If infinite perfection is interpreted as the infinite Creator who is the source of any world, then no created world can equal or exhaust his perfection. No created world can be the epitome of perfection.

If the best possible world is understood as the last term in an infinite series, it would be a contradiction also, for an infinite series has no last term. The last term implies a point beyond which we cannot go, while the infinite series implies an indefinite going beyond. In the best possible world, then, we would be going beyond that which we cannot go beyond--a contradiction.

From the causal relationship between an infinite being (the Creator) and its effect (the world), again, the best possible world would be a contradiction. An infinite effect as infinite would have to be an infinite being which cannot be dependent, but as an effect it would be dependent upon its cause. The medievals would say that, as dependent, the world is composed of essence and existence, but as an infinite being it cannot be composed. An infinite effect as infinite would be uncomposed and as effect would be composed. And this is a contradiction.2

The great Leibniz points us in the right direction as he forthrightedly asserts that the best possible world is basically finite, and infinite only in a relative way. Taken as finite the "best possible" could mean the situation in which we get the maximum effect with a minimum of effort, as when, in drawing a line between two points, the easiest and shortest route is taken. Or, . . . in laying tile, we try to get the greatest number together in the easiest way. A line drawn between two points is limited, as is the area over which tile is laid.3

Leibniz gives us another way this finite world can be considered as infinite in that it is the high point of a pyramid which has an infinite or endless number of worlds below it, but no world higher than it.4 Our world would be the best possible world which has an infinite number of worlds that are worse than it. It would be at the apex of a bottomless pyramid.

The infinite character of the finite world can be likened to the way a finite line can be divided infinitely into a number of sections, as we are accustomed to do when we try to show someone that by dividing the distance from ourselves to a wall, we get 1/2 the distance, then 1/4 . . . then 1/8 . . . and so on. Never do we reach zero distance.

In both of these senses immediately above, our world is assumed to be finite, to have limits. Leibniz merely precludes the possibility of worlds better than the present world and focusses attention on the way in which there can be many worlds worse than this one. In the second we know that in reality we reach the goal--we get to the wall. No matter how many times Achilles halves the distance between himself and the tortoise, we all know that in reality Achilles catches and passes the tortoise.5

In this sense it would be possible to view finite humans as having a greatest misery and a greatest happiness, a greatest possible evil and a greatest possible good. In such a way a person could be considered as infinitely remote from his/her potential happiness or goodness. Or, she could be considered near enough to her greatest happiness as to envision it. In the latter case, we might move toward our goal in smaller and smaller units, something like a modern Achilles who never catches the tortoise.

In sum, the best possible world can be understood as a contradiction but need not.

2) Is this world the best possible world? If it is, then we have taken a long step toward solving the problem of God and evil, for we could not then blame God for making a world of less perfection than it is possible for him to make. Whether or not it was possible for God to prevent the loss of our house in an earthquake or the death of a daughter would make no difference, for God would have done the best he could. We presuppose, of course, that God has no obligation to bring about

the impossible. If this is the best world possible, then God could not be blamed for whatever evil there is in the world; he could not be called less than good, or less than all-powerful.

Leibniz underscored the difficulty of answering this question when he criticized the nature of man's knowledge. How can those who have seen so little of the world judge that this world is not the best possible? Critics who claimed that God could have made a better world than the present one have seen little of the world. They see scarcely farther than their nose, and yet they dare to criticize. When they come to know more about the world, they will see a complex and beautiful system that transcends all imagination.6 Leibniz reminds us that the world was not made for man alone, but if we human beings are truly wise, the world will serve us. We will be happy in the world if we wish to be.

"What is "best?" and "How do we arrive at it?" It is obvious that "good," "better," "best," is understood from our knowledge of this world. It is inextricably tied up with this world, the world in which we have learned and developed our language and concepts. And the most important aspect of this world, as far as we are concerned is our own existence. If our starting point from which we can extrapolate to other worlds is our own present world which has humans in such a prominent place, then a world without us would be suspect as a "better" world. We cannot determine "good" in any way other than by the light of what is good for humans and the universe in which we live. We can hardly opt for a best possible world that has no room for us.

For Leibniz this world is the best possible world on the grounds that God cannot be indifferent in his choice of which world to create. The wiser a man is, the more determined he is toward the most perfect.7 God, who is the epitome of wisdom, would inevitably bring about the best world. To do otherwise would open him up to being indifferent with regard to good and evil and would indicate a lack of goodness or wisdom.8

Aquinas also argues that this world is the best possible, but on other grounds. Here he uses the above-mentioned privileged status of this world. In his *Summa theologiae*9 he says that the present world is now ordered to God's goodness. If we presuppose this kind of world with its various entities, then God cannot make a better world. The reason is that the good of this universe consists in the order given it by God. If God made one of the creatures of the universe better than it is, then the order of the universe would be changed for the worse, just as a chord in a musical piece, if played too loud, would ruin a melody.

In this argument Aquinas sees this world as the best possible, because whatever world is ordered to God's goodness according to his wisdom is that which is best. This world is so ordered, and hence, it is the best possible world.

Yet, God can make other things, or add others to the things he has made, and in such a case the resulting world would be the best.10 Whatever God makes is ordered to his goodness and, hence, is the best. So, whatever other world is so ordered is, likewise, the best world.11 But God is infinite. No matter how many effects he brings about, he still can create more.12Consequently, it is hard to see how we can escape the conclusion that Aquinas holds, that absolutely considered there are better possible worlds, and that God could have brought them about. It is as if the best possible world can be any one of a number of worlds, while any world considered can always be surpassed by a better world. Aquinas allows for a world of greater perfection than the present one.

Here our distinction between conceivable worlds and possible worlds is of help. The former is what Aquinas has in mind when he talks about any world being surpassed by another world. If God is truly infinite and any created world is finite, then there will always be a gap between them. We humans might go part of the way in conceiving a "better" world than the present by proposing a science fiction world in which laws different from those of our world hold. There is always the

possibility, however, that no matter how far we go toward that "better" world, there will always be another one beyond it. The "infinite metaphysical distance" between the most perfect and the finite is the basis for another better world that is possible in the sense of conceivable but not really possible, since the possible has to be considered in relation to our own world.13

Even though Aquinas gives us a reason for seeing the possibility of a better world, Leibniz's underscoring of the limits of human knowledge causes trouble for anyone who would attempt to justify such a claim. Critics of our own world have to come up with a detailed account of a better world. Such an account has to either preserve the laws of this world as we know them or put forth another world with another set of laws and their particular consequences. This they have not done. It is not sufficient to mention one desired modification of this world without showing its ramifications for the whole.

It seems, then, that we cannot clearly show that this world is the best possible; nor can we prove that it is not the best possible, for we cannot articulate in sufficient detail a better world. Below we will see that whether or not it is the best possible, we cannot argue that God had an obligation to bring it about.

3. Those who say that God should have brought into existence the best possible world claim that a good person always tries to bring about as much good as possible. One always tries to do one's best and actualize the greatest good. If one had the power to help us one would surely do so. If one had the wherewithal to give us something that we truly had no right to, something that was truly a gift, one would give it. We all know this kind of person who generously gives to others, who will surely help us if it is at all possible. This person has a commitment to whatever is good, and she is staunchly opposed to whatever is evil.

That truly good person would be one who tries to bring out and develop the potentialities of someone, even though that person did not realize the talent that he had. It is said, for example, that a truly good person, if he could, would provide a musical education to a musically gifted child, even though the child were happy, satisfied and without pain.14

One might contend that parents should try to conceive the best possible child. Parents might have serious doubts about whether it is best to conceive a child with a super intelligence, given the present state of human knowledge. Or, they might doubt whether they could properly bring up such a child, or whether he might demand too much of a sacrifice from others. It is claimed, however, that if all these doubts were dispelled, then good parents should and would try to conceive the best possible child.

We are strongly inclined to think that a good person feels obliged to do good and prevent evil as much as he can. A good person tries to do the best he can in every situation of his life. He is convinced that, all things considered, whatever he does is the best he can and should do.

If all of the above is true, then we should expect the good God to bring about the best possible world. If God is goodness itself, and if God has all power, then why should not he create the best possible world? God, who knows all things and doubts nothing, would and should bring about the greatest good in every instance.

This view is attractive, but is not without difficulties. It must withstand pressure from the existence of genuine supererogatory actions. Supererogatory actions are nonobligatory or "beyond the call of duty" for a good person. Such actions might bring about the greater good in one sense, but whether they are actualized is up to the free will of the agent concerned who is under no moral obligation.

If there were no supererogatory actions--if a person would always have to do what would bring about the greatest good, then the scope of our human freedom would be significantly limited. In a sense we might wonder if there remained any freedom at all. That is, once a person fulfills her ordinary obligations to society, there should be circumstances in which she should be free to devote herself to whatever she wants.

While it might be true that each of us should do much more to relieve the suffering of our neighbor, there should be a limit beyond which we should be able to choose without any strings attached. Earlier we noted the person who knows that she has the talent to do wonderful things with youth, but wants to make jewelry. In the circumstances she should be morally as well as physically free to do whatever she wants to do. Noted, too, was how under certain circumstances a good person can decide to do such things as go to a ball game rather than help out at a Kiwanis auction.

Arguing along these lines, Robert Adams remarks that we ordinarily do not criticize a man for breeding goldfish rather than dogs. Against the idea that parents have an obligation to bring into the world the best possible child, Adams notes that we are not inclined to blame parents for having a normal child rather than one with superhuman intelligence and higher prospects for happiness, should this be possible. On the other hand, we would blame parents if they deliberately took a drug that would cause their child to be deficient in comparison with normal children. The reason, from a religious point of view, is that such a child could not enter fully into God's purposes for human life.15

There are other good reasons why the good person and a good God need not always bring into existence the most excellent type of being.

To demand that a good person produce at every moment the best action that he can places too much of a burden on people. It seems realistic, rather, that the benefactor does not have to give the greatest gift that he can. To require more from a person appears unrealistic and an undesirable restriction on our freedom. It is better that a person retains a domain in which he can exercise freedom. The good artist should not always, without fail, have to produce the most valuable piece of work of which he is capable. Rather, he should have the freedom to choose to produce something of lesser value. Or, semantically one can avoid the supererogatory if we put it this way: Under certain circumstances, the best thing for someone is to do what one wants to do at some time.

If the good person is not obliged to bring about the greater good at all times, then why should we demand that God do so? Even if it could be established that we humans must do the greatest thing we can at any time, we cannot easily apply that principle to God. Aquinas makes good sense when he claims that in creation God's will is attracted to infinite goodness alone, which is God himself. No created goodness could compel God in any way.

This is in accord with the principle that what is best in a created situation is determined by the nature of the things concerned. What is best for a dog or a horse is not the same as what is best for a human being. When God and man are concerned, our expectations have to be different. Although what is good and what is best in regard to God is understood basically from a human point of view, they are not to be equated; we must make adjustments. At first glance this might suggest that although humans are not obliged to perform supererogatory actions, not obliged to perform the most perfect action, God is. However, this obligation would limit God's freedom in much the same way that it would limit human freedom. God is limited only by his own nature in the sense that he cannot do what is inherently inconceivable. He cannot be limited in creation by the nature of the things concerned, as a carpenter in building a house is limited by the quality of wood and stone available. We have accepted Aquinas's position that God's will is determined only by his own

goodness. If we say that in order to be truly good and all-powerful God should create such and such a world, then we are implying that creatures determine his creative act. As such they would limit and determine him, even though they are merely possible and not actual. This would downgrade his freedom and his independence.

In this view, God is free because he is his own proper end and exists for his own sake. God's freedom is rooted in his willing things other than himself without any necessity, although he wills himself necessarily as the absolute good.16 The important thing here is that the divine goodness can be attained through many modes and orders of beings. God's will is not restricted to one type of being or one order. If we want to preserve God's independence and spontaneous freedom, then the mode of a creature's being (i.e. possibility) cannot determine the act of creation. Possibility taken as conceivability or the lack of contradiction is not sufficient of itself to lay an obligation on God to create things in a certain way. There is no reason why God should have to do everything that is conceivable.

God's independence and freedom is a genuine obstacle to any demand that he create a world with this or that type of creature. This divine status forbids the possibility of creating only those persons who would never do anything evil in their lives.

In the theist tradition creation is often spoken of as an expression of God's love. Love leads one to share what one has, and God's love led him to share his perfection and goodness. That is, a determining factor in creation was love, not the degree of goodness had by the conceivable or possible created beings. It is not that God was led to create this or that world because it was better than some other conceivable world. God is and always was in possession of his goal, namely his own goodness. He needs nothing else to attain it. In creation he did not have to use any particular kind of world to reach his end, for any created world would be indifferent to his ultimate end.

The creating God is said to be gracious. Grace is taken by Adams to be "a disposition to love which is not dependent on the merit of the person loved."17 God's grace allows him to create and love less excellent creatures than the best possible. That God is gracious does not demand that the perfection of creatures be the ground for God's choosing to actualize them. We do not praise God for creating us because we are so perfect, sophisticated, or potentially great. The typical Judeo-Christian attitude toward the fact of our existence is one of gratefulness for something which we in no way deserved. The good God is seen as perfectly good not because he created the best possible world, but because he created us and loves us without worrying about whether we are worthy of his love.18

In this view, God's freedom to give something to which nobody has a right must be preserved. Those who demand that God give humans whatever is conceivable fail to recognize this necessity. God should be able to freely give or deny something without conforming to any obligation to do so. What is owed to us in virtue of our nature we expect from God; if we lack it, we are troubled and feel that God has short-changed us. What is not owed to us, however, should not give rise to a complaint, for it is not really fair to fault God for not freely giving us something to which we have no claim.

Attempts to say what the best possible world is move into the area of high-powered science fiction, where mystery and abstract speculation prevail. In this view, even if one could articulate what the best possible world would be like, there would be no obligation on God's part to establish it. And there would be no good reason to be bitterly resentful of God the Creator for bringing about our own world rather than the best possible world.

Against this, Jerome Weinstock maintains that a state of affairs in which God graciously creates a perfect world is to be more highly valued than one in which God graciously creates a less

perfect world.19 The perfection, value and merit of possible creatures is a criterion for creation, but not necessarily a criterion for God's love. In creating, God must bring about the best possible world, but in loving he is indifferent to the objects of his love and can be gracious. A God who creates an imperfect world with grace, when he could have created a perfect world with the same grace, would be perverse. If he were omnipotent and good, he would remove the imperfections and choose a world with perfect creatures—plus grace. By not doing so, he would be choosing what was worse. He would be like the physician who shoots his victim and then heals him, or the clergyman who induces cancer in someone so that he might comfort the sick.

This objection fails. First, it destroys the meaning of gracious (or creating freely). In it, the conceivable status of the "better" world would function as a determinant influencing the creative act, thereby destroying God's freedom in that context. That only God's goodness can move his will is a sound principle. To claim that God is perverse because he brings about a world that is less than perfect is to claim that God is not moved only by his own goodness.

Second, a more perfect world might be more highly valued in one sense, but in the overall view it would be a less highly valued state, for God's freedom would be degraded.

Third, the role of love as a possible motive for God's creating is ignored by the objector. God creates because his infinite love overflows and moves him to give of himself. Moreover, the objector's distinction between the criterion for creation and the criterion for God's love appears arbitrary. It cannot be made so easily.

Fourth, the objector assumes that a good person must bring about the best possible effect at all times, a principle that we have questioned. It precludes the possibility that true supererogatory actions can be applied to our understanding of God.

Fifth, like other objectors, he has to tell us what a perfect world would be like. This he has not done.

I do not think that it can be proved that this is the best world. Nor do I think that it can be proved that this is not the best world. Central to the discussion is the elaboration in some detail of the characteristics of a better world. This I find lacking in the thought of those who say that a better world is possible. God might have been able to make a better world, but it is not easy to say either what it should be like or why he should have brought it about. And, for all we know this might be the best possible world. Objectors fail to show clearly that a good and all powerful God would have to bring about the best possible world. They fail to give us a comprehensive picture of the "better" world they are advocating, and they fail to respect the right of the Creator to bestow or deny a perfection that goes beyond what is required by a creature's nature.

We should not blithely act as if there can be no world better than the one we have, as if our own world should not be improved, as if we had no obligation to try to rid the world of the evils that we find in it. Nor should we act as if the obligation to bring about all conceivable improvements should fall upon the Divinity.

This being said, we know that the objectors to the good and all-powerful God think that this is not the best possible world and that God should have created a better world. In the following chapters, we will consider some of their proposals for such "better" worlds and point out their shortcomings.

Notes

1. Cf. Richard La Croix, "Unjustified Evil and God's Choice," *Sophia*, xiii, no. 1, (April, 1974).

2. Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, ed. P. Caramello (Taurini: Marietti, 1948), I, q. 25, a. 2.

3. Leibniz, *The Monadology and other Philosophical Writings*, trans. R. Latta (London: Oxford University Press, 1925), p. 341.

4. Leibniz, *Theodicy, Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil*, par. 416.

5. Cf. W. Shea, "God, Evil and Professor Schlesinger," *J. Value Inquiry*, 4 (1970), pp. 219-228.

6. Leibniz, *Theodicy*, par. 194.

7. Leibniz, "On the Ultimate Origination of Things," *The Monadology and other Philosophical Writings*, trans. Latta, p. 343.

8. Leibniz, *Theodicy*, par. 175.

9. I, q. 25, art. 6, ad 3.

10. *Ibid*.

11. De potentia, q. 1, art 5, ad 15.

12. De potentia, q. 1, art. 2, c.

13. Paul Siwek, *The Philosophy of Evil* (New York: The Ronald Press, 1956), pp. 206-207.

14. George Schlesinger, "Omnipotence and Evil: an Incoherent Problem," *Sophia*, iv, no. 3 (October, 1965), p. 22.

15. Robert Adams, "Must God Create for the Best?" *Philosophical Review*, 81, (1972) pp. 317-332.

16. Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 19, art. 3, c, art. 10, c.

17. Adams, p. 318.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 323-325.

19. Cf. Jerome Weinstock, "Must God Create the Best Possible World?" *Sophia*, xiv, no. 2 (July, 1975) pp. 32-39.

Chapter VII

The Amount of Evil in the World: Is It Too Great? The Issue of Pointless Evil

Even though one might not be able to establish that God should have created the best possible world, this does not do away with his possible obligation to have brought into existence a world that is better than our present world. The critics who object to the existence of a good and omnipotent God often claim that the amount of evil in the world is too great. They question how such a world of waste, suffering and immorality could be the product of such a God. David Hume thought that there was so much evil in the world that we would have to say that God botched the task of creation. Hume, however, would settle for a world in which man was more industrious, used his mind more, and applied himself with greater diligence.1

H. J. McCloskey thinks that God could have drastically reduced the amount of moral evil or eliminated it entirely. McCloskey doubts the possibility that the number of people who practice virtue is sufficient to outweigh the number of those who bring about evil, the evilness of their eternal damnation and the physical evil they cause to others. He claims that relatively few persons attain higher virtue. A very large number of persons are destined to be damned. There is no balance.2

Such claims are of dubious value. McCloskey's concern for the evilness of eternal damnation doesn't help his case, for eternal damnation is hardly a settled issue even amongst Christians, and is entangled in the difficulties of scriptural interpretation. Even if one accepts the doctrine, it is still impossible to determine who or how many persons are condemned. It is also hard to see how one can say that a relatively few persons will attain higher virtue.

Today reputable theologians would be very hesitant to declare the number of people to be damned, or to evaluate the inner subjective virtuous state of others. As we have seen, since the good is so prevalent that we take it for granted, it is difficult to see how one can claim that the number of people who do evil is larger and outweighs the number of people who live virtuous lives and bring about a vast amount of good. One has little justification for judging as insensitive those who see the good in the world as far outweighing the amount of evil.

McCloskey's complaint focusses attention on a needed important distinction: that between the evil that humans inflict on each other and the evil that they suffer as inhabitants of this biological and physical world. Most of us would agree that humans hurt each other more than is necessary, without good cause and without proper concern for others. In a sense, there is too much evil in the world, but that does not mean that the amount of evil outweighs the amount of good or that the blame for this evil is to be placed on God rather than upon ourselves. This idea will be the background of the remaining chapters of this book: we must take responsibility for many of the evils of our existence.

Nicolas Berdyaev gives us a possible reason for the tendency to overestimate the amount of evil. He claims that there is a "spark of the infinite" in man; in our unrevealed depths we are a "being who is infinite and who is straining towards infinity." We are open to the infinite. Man is foreordained to eternity which he seeks, but he is also finite, temporal and mortal. This is the painful contradiction in man, the cause of human suffering. Man crashes against an insurmountable wall. In the depth of human suffering is the experience of unsurmountability, inevitability and irrevocability.3 It is the thirst for the infinite in us that leads us to the judgment that no matter how much good there is in the world, there is still too much evil.

No doubt, the judgment of what is good or evil and their respective amounts in the world is a complex and difficult question. We know of the possibility that in judging a particular action good or evil we can be tragically wrong; *a fortiori* the same should be said concerning general judgments. The trouble that Sartre's fictional protagonist, Goetz, had in determining what is long-run good or evil,4 is repeated by a real life tragedy: the Christian Olga Lengyel's terrible mistake when, at the selection platform in the death camp, she asked that her teen age son be sent to the left with her aged parents, not knowing that the aged would be put to death in the gas chambers that day.5

As we have seen in the previous chapter, Leibniz's doubt concerning the ability of humans to judge the extent of evil was well-founded. We might sincerely question whether human beings are really in a proper position to make the judgment that there is too much evil, too little or just the right amount of evil in the world. Leibniz underlines human limitations in knowing the actual instances of good and evil. He reminds us of what the lawyers say about judging: It is not proper to judge unless one has examined the whole law. Humans have available to them the record of only a few thousand years of an immeasurable eternity, and yet they are so rash as to judge. We are like men in the underground salt mines who think that there is no light in the world other than the small lamp that guides them. Or, we are like someone who sees only a small part of a covered painting and judges it to be ugly, confused and distasteful. When the painting is uncovered, however, that part will be seen as being of the highest artistry.6 We should be hesitant in judging evil that has no purpose as far as we can see. We see only a small part of reality and would be in a proper position to judge only when we see the whole law or the whole dispensation of things.

A contemporary philosopher, M. B. Ahern, focusses on our lack of the factual knowledge needed to express all of the concrete problems concerning evil or to express the goods that might justify evil in those cases. The problems of evil arise with the actual instances of evil, past, present and future. In each case, there are many instances that we do not and cannot know. Especially in regard to future evils, we know neither what evils will occur nor what goods might justify them. In order to be able to give a definitive answer when arguing from concrete instances, we would need divine omniscience, a God's eye view of the past, present and future. Since humans obviously do not have this, our attempts to obtain a final answer to the problem of evil by concentrating on particular cases will of necessity be futile. Especially misguided is the attempt to prove a negative fact, namely, that no good that justifies a particular evil will ever exist.7 Such difficulties overwhelm the human capacity. Ahern claims that the consequences of all of this are that the possible and not the actual justification of evil in the whole problem takes on an added importance. Our very imperfect knowledge of the possible prevents us from seeing what God might intend by allowing a concrete evil.8

The claim that there is too much evil in the world gives rise to some important basic questions. What is meant by too much? How must we go about making such a judgment? Why do we make such a claim? Is it possible that some people are in a better position to make the judgment than others? Are some people better equipped to appreciate the amount of good? Is some kind of training necessary and sufficient to enable someone to make an accurate judgment on the amount of evil in the world? What is the function of an optimistic or pessimistic personality on such a judgment? We know that there are those who see a glass as half full and others who claim that it is half empty. Can we really justify a pessimistic attitude toward life? Could it be that I alone decide whether to become an optimist or a pessimist?

These are pertinent but difficult questions. In the attempt to find answers, five factors are relevant: selective perception, cultural environment, training and experience, one's outlook on life and the role of the risktaker.

Selective perception--the possibility that it is involved in our judgment of the amount of evil that exists in the world is real and operative. Even if we do not try to determine whether something seen as evil now would really be seen as such in the overall view of things, we still have difficulty in judging that something presently confronting us is evil. In a sense, we choose what we want to see. The observer chooses what to spend his time on, what to include in his report and what to leave out, what to emphasize and what to push into the background.

Our judgment is determined significantly by our own culture. It depends on how we look at things, which in turn depends to some degree on our background and upbringing. From the history of science, we know that different thinkers grew up in different environments, worried over different problems and made different judgments as to what existed in the world. Our culture and background might hinder our perception. The resulting blindspots can distort our evaluation of the ease or hardship in the life of others. Could it be that at times we judge people to be poor and to be suffering because they reject our own culture and its emphasis on material values? . . . and others judge our culture to be superficial and short on true values because we ignore the spiritual?

Training and experience can also determine to a degree what the observer will see and what he will miss. Air pilots, sailors, soldiers, musicians and other highly trained observers pick up what ordinary persons fail to appreciate. This implies the possibility that some people in the world are in a better position to judge. We are led to ask whether, without training or experience, some people are less equipped to appreciate the relative amount of good or evil. An older generation does not see its mistakes and shortcomings as clearly as the young who must suffer from them. A person who has been caught up and suffered the horrors of wartime strife speaks with compelling authority on the evils of war, an authority that no others can match.

One's outlook on life, at times, influences our estimation of the quantity of evil in our personal life. A crippled girl is happy because she can write poetry. A healthy, affluent lady finds life to be boring. Could it be that humans have it within their power to become happy or miserable under a wide range of conditions, and that to a great extent they, and nobody else, decide what they will become? Could it be that the individual person, and nobody else, decides whether to become an optimist or a pessimist? Or are we rigidly determined by our environment or genetics to see the world in this or in that way?

Another fact also has to be taken into consideration: that "risktakers" are also found among us--courageous persons who do not shrink from danger and the presence of evil in the world, but to a degree, actually seek it out. They don't think there is too much evil in the world. The "risktakers" would consider a world in which God intervened and saved men from any danger as a rather dull place in which to live.9 They are partly motivated by the pleasure one feels when one does something that should be done, as when a war photographer would exit running from a plane on a Vietnam landing strip, snapping pictures of death and destruction all around him because he felt a duty to show the war as it really was. The mountain climber thought he had an important lesson to teach man: that there is no limit to the effort that man can demand of himself. Such persons can also be motivated by the fantastic pleasure experienced in the face of a possible loss of one's life, as when the bullfighter is engaged in controlling an enraged bull or a race-car driver handles a super-hot machine. This pleasure is enhanced when one realizes that one is dominating something that would overwhelm any other person. Even if one's performance is in private, without an audience, the risktaker is aware that he is distinguishing himself, becoming a very

particular and singular person. The possibility of his death puts his action on a singularly significant level.

The risktakers realize that danger stimulates a man and makes him exceptionally alert and alive. It heightens all the senses and, when passed, gives a person an extraordinary high, as he finds himself still alive. He has accepted a challenge and has triumphed. He has controlled nature and has escaped from danger, and this leads to an experience of great exhilaration. The risktakers show us the possible good consequences that can result from the challenges of evil.

Granted the existence of difficulties in determining the amount of evil in the world, there is good reason to think that the value of the amount of good produced by ordinary people who freely make many sound moral decisions each day is overwhelmingly great. Immorality is the exception rather than the rule. This is not to say that too many persons fail too often in their moral duties, not to say that even many persons at a particular time or place are under the influence of a distorted morality that causes great suffering, or that many persons are truly corrupt. Such failures, however, are seen more as the exception to the way persons act and should act, as falling short of a proper life conduct that humans expect and daily enjoy. True, some parents inflict terrible harm on their children, but when this occurs we recognize it as a human failing that, in general, is not the case and need not be; in serious cases we remove the child from the home. Mothers know that they should lovingly care for their children and, for the most part, do so. Motorists drive on the proper side of the road and obey traffic signals. Businessmen aim to stand by deals that they make, and set up information systems to help each other avoid the irresponsible and unscrupulous. Medical researchers try to advance our knowledge of the human body and techniques of treatment. All of this happens on such a huge scale that we take it for granted. It occurs freely in the lives of those who choose a profession or state in life, or who willingly accept their state. This results in an enormous amount of good, of which we can easily be unaware, since it is presumed to be right and occurs so extensively. The possibilities of making mistakes in this complex world are great, and many succumb to them, but there is good reason to think that the actualities of day-to-day achievements by good people by far outnumber the consequences of those who do evil.

Most of us very probably accept a view such as this, that the amount of good in the world by far overshadows the evil. John Dewey bore witness to this idea when he remarked that the hazardous, uncertain character of the world, its precarious nature, can be more deeply appreciated by focusing our attention on evil rather than on good. The good presents no problem. It is what we expect. "Goods we take for granted; they are as they should be; they are natural and proper." Goods are evidence of how the real world regularly operates and allows us to do things and gain our just deserts. Even though there is such a thing as "good luck," the goods of the world happen so regularly and repeatedly that they are not as convincing evidence of the uncertain character of the world as are evils. Evils are more "accidental" than goods, and we are faced with a problem, as we try to insulate ourselves from them. But there’s no real problem of the good--we take it for granted. 10

Leibniz reminds us that if we were usually sick, we would be less sensible to evils and very sensitive to good health. But, really, it’s much better that health is usual and the norm, while sickness is the exception.11 It is an error to think that evils are great and many in comparison to the amount of good. We don’t pay enough attention to the good in our lives, perhaps because it is always mixed with some evil.

Leibniz was convinced that we should give the benefit of the doubt to the good God. Those who think that God could have made a better world set themselves up as ridiculous critics of God. While they have seen little of the world and see scarcely farther than their nose, they criticize the

world, but when they come to know more about it, they will see that the world is beautiful and complex, but that it was not made for man alone. Although this results in man having to endure unpleasant things, if he is truly wise, he will see to it that the world serves him. He will be happy in the world as long as he wants to be.12 Leibniz thinks that there is incomparably more good than evil in the life of men, "as there are incomparably more houses than prisons." He thinks that historians are at fault because they keep their mind on the evil in man's life, rather than on the good.13

Many ordinary people are of the same mind--that the world contains a much greater amount of good than evil. Sincerely grateful for the simple pleasures of life and seeing a great abundance of good around them, they do not criticize God for bringing about a world such as ours, with the present amount of evil. They are appreciative of the good things to be enjoyed and are ready to accept suffering and evil if it should come to them. We find poor and handicapped persons who are grateful and happy for the little they have. They lead us to think that people can be happy under the most disparate circumstances.

The claim that the amount of evil in the world far outweighs the good cannot be justified. I do not deny that there is too much evil in the world, but I believe that we, and not God, are to blame for a great deal of it. And there is much we can do to lessen that amount, if we only cared enough.

Apparent Gratuitous Evil. A more powerful objection is made by those who shift their criticism from the amount to the type of evil. They would allow some evil in the world in order to build character and for understanding or appreciating the good.14 But they still have a problem which arises from gratuitous evil, that evil for which no immediately obvious explanation exists to account for its necessity. Gratuitous evil is *prima facie* unwarranted.15 This should not be too much of a problem, if we take gratuitous evil as apparently unwarranted. For in such a difficult context, we should not expect explanations to be "immediately obvious," and *prima facie* matters always give way to the results of further considerations.

If we take "gratuitous" as freely given or without reason, the matter becomes more serious. We would be saying that there is no reason for such and such an evil. William Rowe calls it "pointless" in his fawn example. In a forest fire, a horribly burned fawn lies in agony for several days before it dies. Rowe believes that an omnipotent omniscient being could easily have prevented it from getting burned or seen to it that it died quickly. And yet, Rowe does not claim that we can prove the existence of intense sufferings which an omnipotent and omniscient being could have prevented without preventing the occurrence of a greater good. For he sees the possibility of the fawn's suffering as leading to a familiar greater good or a good that we do not know. This forces us to work in the context of what it would be rational to believe rather than to know. Rowe's objection: it is unreasonable to believe that all similar instances of intense agony are necessary for a greater good. God should be able to bring about that greater good without some particular suffering.16

There are problems here. The first, and I believe the fatal objection to Rowe, is the limited character of human knowledge. What we have said concerning the difficult position humans are in when trying to judge the concrete instances of evil applies here. After seeing so little of the record of an immeasurable eternity, we should be hesitant to judge that out of a present evil a greater good cannot come, or that there is no reason for such an evil. If there is a reason for apparently pointless evil, should we be expected to detect it, and if not, then should we believe that it is really pointless?17 I do not see how or why we should be expected to see the necessity of

every necessary and not pointless evil. The complexity of the universe and the feebleness of human knowledge are the driving factors here.

Another problem is the difficulty in setting the number of instances of suffering that would have to be alleviated by a good God. As we have seen and will see later on, there seems to be no limit to the demand. It does no good just to say that there must be at least one particular evil that is not necessary for a subsequent greater good. That we know so little of the world should lead us to doubt, rather than believe, such a highly speculative possibility.

Third, even though God could intervene and save this particular fawn, i.e. even if he could suspend a natural law or go beyond it, this does not give us the right to demand that he do so. The fawn 'suffers' and dies because it is a part of the complex natural world in which any animal, rational or not, would 'suffer' when it found itself in certain circumstances. Going beyond nature, in the manner of bestowing a free gift of protection, would have to remain freely actualized, not demanded. To see to it that no such animal would suffer in such circumstances would demand profound changes in the laws of nature, a move that returns us to the difficulties of a demanded, best possible world.

Fourth, there are problems with the concept of animal suffering. Although many of us believe that animals suffer, there are some disturbing issues that muddy the waters. We believe that animals suffer, because we suffer when our bodies are injured or ill. The structure of humans and animals are similar, and we are aware of the evolutionary development of humans. Painful stimuli are tissue-destructive, escape-provoking, emotion-changing.18 In an animal under stress, blood pressure rises, violent muscular contractions and hyperventilation occur, metabolic rate and temperature increase. Up to 300 percent of normal readings are detected.19 There is good reason to think that humans and animals react in similar ways to such stimuli. When we are tortured or injured, we suffer, and we easily conclude that animals do likewise. Monkeys that are inflicted with pain stimuli cry out, try to escape and to fight off the offender. Humans do likewise. But the matter is not clear.

That the physiologies are remarkably similar leads advocates such as Peter Singer to claim that, since we have no doubt that our best friends feel pain as we do at times, we should be convinced that animals have similar feelings in similar circumstances.20 The expressions of fear, anger, love, joy, surprise and sexual arousal are not specific to our own species.21In this speculative area, such thinkers are strongly inclined to attribute a suffering to animals which is comparable to that suffered by humans. According to these thinkers, the fawn undergoes genuine suffering.

Keele and Smith claim that animals might suffer even more intensely than humans insofar as all their pain is serious and significant, accompanied by a fear and anxiety that cannot be overcome. This would be like the pain we call "pathological" in humans. When a person suffers from cancer, for example, his pain can be accompanied by fear and anxiety which is treated by sedation, a sedation that is all the more needed in animals.22 This suggests the possibility that although humans have the capacity to rise above their pain by mental means, an animal that lacks such power might suffer even to a greater extent. It would be like a person who lives in fear and anxiety because his pain cannot be controlled and whose only alternative, other than death, is sedation.

The above concerns point to a serious matter in animal and human suffering, namely, the role of consciousness as a necessary condition for suffering. There are "levels of awareness," a "marked gradation" of awareness in mammals, and little in frogs and fish, for example.23 There is a reluctance to expect a high level of affective experience in some species, even though the "animal may react vigorously and adaptively as a spinal frog can do." Ordinarily we do not consider single-

celled organisms and insects as being conscious, even though they react to stimuli. The venus fly trap acts as if it knows the fly is there, but we do not attribute consciousness to it. A robot can be programmed to manifest pain behavior and to defend itself, but this does not give us reason to consider it as conscious.

Central to this problem is the distinction between perception and consciousness. From the fact that we perceive something, we cannot infer that we were conscious when we did so. For we know that we perceive things unconsciously, as when, while daydreaming, we drive our car unconsciously, directing it around obstacles and keeping it on the road. If we did not in some way perceive the safe way, we would not reach our destination. We apparently have a perceptual experience of the safe way but are unconscious of it. In the case of "blind sight" behavior, it appears possible to have visual experiences of which we are unaware, unconscious. A person who claimed to be blind in his left field of view was able to identify shapes of objects that he could not see. There seem to be non-conscious experiences to which we behaviorally respond.24

The import of all this is that behavioral responses could indicate a pain of which the subject is unaware. As far as we can tell, however, without consciousness a being cannot suffer. This is why we deny that robots, single-celled organisms and insects suffer. Behavioral evidence alone might show that we experience pain, but it cannot establish that we suffer that pain. Some parent birds will show pain behavior as they feign injury to lure predators from their young, even though they are not suffering due to physical pain.25 Michael McQuillen, writing in *Issues in Law and Medicine*, acknowledges that the biological and behavioral data do not preclude the possibility that a person in the persistent vegetative state perceives pain.26However, whether the person is suffering is still a question. This leads us to distinguish between pain as a physical sensation and pain as consciously suffered.

The distinction between perceiving pain and experiencing suffering has been underscored by Norman Swartz. He thinks that the empirical data are forcing the two concepts of sensing pain and experiencing hurt to come apart. He found in the neuroscience literature that lobotomized patients felt the painful pressure of a tumor but were not disturbed by it, that there was a chasm between the hurting of pain and the sensation of pain. Certain tranquilizers allow patients to report certain stimuli as being excruciatingly painful, but the patients do not seem to care. The sense aspects of pain exist, but the emotional aspects are suppressed.27 Also, against pain experience as a sufficient or necessary condition for suffering is that psychotic patients in an acute medical condition, like a perforated ulcer or appendicitis, are reported to experience pain without suffering.28 Daniel Dennett in his *Brainchildren* brands as ludicrous the following tacit assumptions that seem to appear in many discussions of pain: that suffering and pain are the same thing, that all pain is "experienced pain," and that we can determine the "amount of suffering" by just adding up all the pains.29

The human mind or the emotions can be the deciding factor of whether or not a person experiences suffering. Sri Aurobindo tells us how men, when they are highly excited or exalted are physically indifferent to pain in situations that would ordinarily inflict severe torture or suffering. Suffering occurs only when the nerves are able to reassert themselves and remind the person of the habitual obligation to suffer under such conditions.30 E. E. Harris remarks that humans, in a stressful condition such as battle, become aware of their injury only when things quiet down and they have a chance to reflect on what has happened. 31

At times soldiers have been said to experience the yoga response and the euphoric experience of being wounded but still alive and consequently safe from the further horrors of the war.32 Henry Beecher observed how, among the seriously wounded men on the Anzio beachhead of World War

II, two thirds of those who had grievous but not fatal wounds refused medication. They were happy, for their having been wounded was their ticket out of the war. The war was over for them--they would no longer have to fear imminent death. Beecher compared these men to patients with similar wounds in a civilian hospital who complained and demanded large quantities of painkilling drugs. 33 We can safely say that the soldiers were not experiencing pain or were experiencing pain, but were not suffering from it.

Medical people consider as highly questionable whether a person in a persistent vegetative state (one who is awake but unconscious) suffers pain. When nutrition and hydration are withdrawn from such a person, they claim that suffering, such as the burning of urine, hunger and thirst, are not experienced.34 The American Academy of Neurology, in a brief filed in the Brophy case, took an unequivocal position that the PVS patient cannot experience suffering.35

It seems reasonable to think that the highly excitable, exalted or stressful state that somehow short circuits the experience of suffering in humans can have a similar effect in other animals. In a stressful situation, we know from medicine that under traumatic strain the human body shuts down even to the point of going into a coma. After a serious operation, a person is not discharged from the hospital until his major systems are functioning again. Consequently, since we are inclined to argue for animal suffering because of our knowledge of human suffering, there is some reason to think that a somewhat similar type of traumatic condition can affect the suffering of an animal. The person who is burning to death shortly loses his sensation of pain. Could it be that the body of Rowe's fawn somehow shuts down and reacts to pain in a similar way? True, the fawn is part of the natural order of things in which from time to time animals as well as humans are caught by the forces of nature, but there appear to be reasons why we can question the degree and intensity of its agony.

Considering the matter from the structural aspect, we still cannot conclude that pain behavior indicates suffering. We would expect the agents spoken of above to experience suffering, for they would have the structural configuration and modifications consonant with those who truly suffer. And yet, this does not always occur. The use of placebos and hypnosis or suggestion are among the aspects of the psychology of pain showing that brain structure and sensory input are not sufficient conditions for the experience of suffering.36 Nor is structure a necessary condition for sensation. We are sure that birds see, but the structure of their brains contains no visual cortex.37 In the blind-sight phenomenon, the individual suffers from damage to his striate or visual cortex and is expected to lose sight in that part of the visual field. And yet, he responds as if he can see.38 In the phantom limb phenomenon also we see suffering without the presence of the structural source of the pain.39 Then, too, suffering without a structural basis is the mark of depression.40 One can suffer pain without the relevant bodily structure, as we see occurring in a depressed person. Structure is not a necessary condition for the experience of suffering.

All of this leads us to seriously question our knowledge of animal suffering.

It is possible, as Keele and Smith have claimed above, that an animal might suffer even more intensely than humans, as in fear it is confronted by a danger to its life. For thinkers of this inclination an animal has a sense of its own body and a sense of self. They downplay the distinction between perceptual and reflective consciousness, noting that perceptual consciousness in an animal easily leads into a reflective consciousness, as it pursues or flees from another. 41 To some degree many animals have a sense of the past and the future. Chimpanzees not only can sometimes recognize mirror images as representing their own bodies, but also, according to some, show signs of planning and cooperation.42 It appears that such reasons have led thinkers like Peter Carruthers

to hesitate to argue against the moral standing of animals on the basis of the quality or the lack of their consciousness; he thinks that the matter is too speculative.43

Others, however, think that animals are wholly absorbed in instinctive behavior and are unconscious of present pain. According to E. E. Harris, they do not, as far as we know, look backward to what might have been and forward to what might come, actions that humans do and which make human suffering so painful.44 Harris questions the capacity of animals to engage in relatively long range planning and its defense, an idea that is at the basis of Carruthers's doubts about the moral standing of animals. This matter is complex. On the one hand, it is hard to see how one can say that an animal in danger has no knowledge of what might come about, no fear of its own demise. On the other, it is difficult to understand how even a primate can view his death as a human would, as the impossibility of attaining a rich life full of exciting possibilities and experiences.

This leaves us with a problem: how to ascertain the extent of animal suffering when it is so difficult to judge the extent of their consciousness and to clearly see true suffering rather than mere pain behavior. In attempting to determine the extent of human or animal suffering, we rely on the observation of behavior which often leaves us mystified. But, as every veterinarian knows, there is a difference between treating an animal and dealing with a human.

We can talk to our neighbor who is in pain; he can tell us that when he was wounded in battle, he did not want morphine, that in the heat of battle he suffered no pain, as he badly burned his hand on the hot barrel of his gun.45 He can tell us why he reached his hand into a mass of flames and kept it there: because he knew that he must turn off a valve and stop the flow of fuel that would turn a whole neighborhood into an inferno.46 When he cannot communicate with us, we do not know if or to what degree he is suffering as in the case of the person in a persistent vegetative state (PVS). Even though a higher animal is conscious and is likely suffering pain, we still do not know the quality of that suffering. We cannot discuss how it feels.

Biological and behavioral evidence of themselves can hardly establish the type and degree of human suffering. The difficulty is greater when judging animal suffering. The behavior of an animal who responds to appropriate stimuli can be interpreted as an effort to survive in the evolutionary struggle. In this way, we interpret the pain behavior of single-celled organisms, insects and robots, and what we see in the blindsight phenomenon. These things respond to stimuli in order to maintain their existence, even though they are not conscious. The survival instinct is prominent in the feigned behavior of the parent bird, where the parent who is not in pain tries to draw attention away from her young.

In the context of suffering then, it is possible that a person can perceive pain or give all the indications of pain but not suffer from it. This could be what happens in the case of animals.47 There remains the possibility that an animal's experience of stimuli which we would find painful is non-painful or less painful due to a difference in consciousness. The pain behavior of animals even might not involve what we call suffering.48 Our knowledge of the intensity and quality of animal suffering leaves much to be desired.

In the fawn example, where we are dealing with animal suffering, perhaps we should be somewhat hesitant about saying what an animal goes through when it apparently is in agony. Rowe agrees that in such a discussion we are not in the realm of conclusive proof but must deal with probability and belief. Given the complexity of the issue, it seems that there are too many difficulties with the suffering fawn example for it to be a serious objection to the goodness and power of God.

Humans and animals are part of a complex biological and physical system in which all things must undergo changes, deteriorate and die. It is an evolutionary system in which life lives on life, a world in which we cannot get away from destruction and death, a world that is full of danger and excitement. Although we are inclined to say that it is not to be unexpected that animals as well as humans suffer in such a world, we cannot be so sure of that if a distinction between experiencing pain and experiencing suffering holds.

Rowe also uses Bruce Russell's example, that of the little girl who was beaten, raped and murdered by her mother's boyfriend who was drinking and on drugs.49 The objector thinks that since any good person would have prevented such a disaster, God who knows all things and has the power should have protected the little girl. The issue is more complex than that suggested by the fawn example since it involves human freedom. One can ask "Why did the good God not stop such a cruel injustice?"

In responding we point to the powerful freedom that humans have which lays upon us a profound responsibility; we can be each other's lover, helper and even savior, but we can also be each other's murderer or torturer. History tells us that we have the power to abuse our freedom, to destroy ourselves and others in the most atrocious ways. We know that when someone abuses what he has been given, anyone might suffer, especially those closest to him. We will go into this in greater detail in Chapter X.50

Apparently gratuitous or pointless suffering is called by John Hick "haphazard suffering." All of these ways of expressing evil are grounded in our lack of knowledge. The evil is gratuitous or pointless because we can see no reason why it should be. It is haphazard because we cannot predict when it is going to happen.

We are dealing here with a question of human knowledge. Is it possible that we could modify our knowledge so as to do away with gratuitous or haphazard evil? Would this produce a "better" world? And if such a world is really a "better" world, then was God obligated to bring it about? A proposed change in our knowledge will be considered in the following chapters. There we will consider some of the proposed "better" worlds which the critics claim that a good, omniscient and all powerful God should have made. These worlds the critics present as having a lesser amount of evil, but we will see that they present difficulties of their own.

Notes

1. David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Part X,, Essential Works of David Hume, pp. 363-365

2. H. J. McCloskey, "God and Evil," *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 10 (1960), reprinted in Baruch Brody, *Readings in the Philosophy of Religion*, 2nd ed., (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972), pp. 273-91.

3. Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Divine and the Human*, p. 70.

4. Jean Paul Sartre, *The Devil and the Good Lord*.

5. Olga Lengyel, *Five Chimneys, the Story of Auschwitz* (n.l. Ziff-Davis, 1947), p.73.

6. Leibniz, "On the Ultimate Origination of Things," *The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, trans. R. Latta, pp. 346-347.

7. M. B. Ahern, *The Problem of Evil* (New York: Schocken, 1971), pp.54-57.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

9. Robert Daley, "The Risktakers," *Playboy*, June 1969, pp. 141-142, 150, 176-181.

10. John Dewey, *Experience and Nature* (New York: Dover, 1958), pp. 44-45.

11. Leibniz, *Theodicy*, par. 13.

12. *Theodicy*, par. 194.

13. *Theodicy*, par. 148.

14. Edward Madden, "The Riddle of God and Evil," *Current Philosophical Issues, Essays in Honor of Curt John Ducasse*, p. 196.

15. *Ibid*.

16. William Rowe, *Philosophy of Religion--an Introduction*, 2nd ed., (Belmont, Ca.: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1993), 80-86.

17. Cf., Stephen Wykstra "The Humean Obstacle to Evidential Arguments from Suffering: On Avoiding the Evils of `Appearances'." *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion*, 16, (1984), pp. 73-93.

18. C. Poggio and V. Mountcastle, "A Study of the functional contributions of the lemniscal and spinothamic systems....*Bullitin Hopkins Hosp*. 106:266, (1960), p. 302. In Dallas Pratt, M.D., *Alternatives to Pain In Experiments on Animals* (n.l.: Argus Archives, 1980), p. 11.

19. H. Hillman, *Scientific Undesirability of Painful Experiments* (Zurich: WFPA, 1970). In Pratt, *Ibid.*, p. 14.

20. Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (New York: Discuss-Avon, 1977), pp. 10-11.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

22. C. Keele and R. Smith, *The Assessment of Pain in Man and Animals* (London: Livingston, 1962). Cf. Griffin, *Animal Mind . . .*, p. 15.

23. T.H. Bullock, "Afterthoughts on Animal Minds," pp. 4ll-412. In D. R. Griffin, Ed. *Animal Mind--Human Mind* (N. Y.: Springer-Verlag, 1982).

24. Peter Harrison, "Do Animals Feel Pain?," *Philosophy*, 66 (1991) 25-40. pp. 30-31.

25. Harrison, 26-27.

26. Michael McQuillen "Can People Who Are Unconscious or in the `Vegetative State' Perceive Pain," *Issues in Law and Medicine*, 6 (Spring, 1991), pp. 373-383

27. Norman Swartz, *Beyond Experience--Metaphysical Theories and Philosophical Constraints* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), pp. 139-142. Cf. David F. Lindsley and J. Eric Holmes, *Basic Human Neurophysiology* (New York: Elsevier Science Publishing Co., 1984), p. 117. Peter Nathan, *The Nervous System*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 105. Dale M. Atrens and Ian S. Curthoys, *The Neurosciences and Behavior*, 2nd ed. (Sydney: Academic Press, 1982), p. 93.

28. McQuillen, *Ibid*.

29. Daniel Dennett, *Brainchildren?Essays on Designing Minds* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), p. 352.

30. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, pp. 106-107.

31. Errol E. Harris, "Atheism and Theism" *Tulane Studies in Philosophy* xxvi (1977), 105-132. P. 111..

32. McQuillen, *ibid*.

33. Henry K. Beecher, "Pain in Men Wounded in Battle," *Annals of Surgery*, 96, (1946), pp. 104-105. *Measurement of Subjective Responses: Quantitative Effects of Drugs* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959). Frederick J. Evans, "The Power of the Sugar Pill," *Psychology Today*, April, 1974, pp. 55-59.

34. Ronald Cranford, M.D., "The Persistent Vegetative State: The Medical Reality," *Hastings Center Report*, 18, no. 1 (Feb. 1988), pp. 29-32.

35. Brophy vs. New England Sinai Hospital, Inc., *Amicus Curiae Brief, American Academy of Neurology* (Minneapolis, MN: 1986).

36. Harrison, pp. 28-29.

37. Harrison, p. 30.

38. Harrison, p. 30.

39. Harrison, p. 29.

40. McQuillen, *ibid*.

41. Cf. D.R. Griffin, *ibid.*, D. Radner and M. Radner, *Animal Consciousness* (Buffalo: Prometheus, 1989); R. C. Jeffrey, "Animal Interpretation." In *Actions and Events: Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson*, ed. E. Lepore and B. P. McLaughlin (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985); M. Midgley, *Beast and Man: the Roots of Human Nature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978); *Animals and Why They Matter* (Athens Ga: University of Georgia Press, 1983); J. Dupre, "The Mental Lives of Animals," In *Interpretation and Explanation in the Study of Animal Behavior*, ed. M. Bekoff and D. Jamieson, Vol. I. (Boulder, Co.: Westview Press, 1990).

42. D.R. Griffin, *Animal Mind* . . ., p. 249. Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 110-117.

43. Peter Carruthers, *The Animals Issue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 194.

44. Errol E. Harris, "Atheism and Theism," *ibid*.

45. Carruthers, p. 266.

46. Harrison, p. 37.

47. Peter Carruthers, "Brute Experience," *Journal of Philosophy*, 86 (1989), pp. 258-269.

48. Peter Harrison, *ibid*.

49. Bruce Russell, "The Persistent Problem of Evil," *Faith and Philosophy*, vol. 6, no. 2 (April, 1989), pp.121-139.

50. William Alston discusses this case in great detail in his "The Inductive Argument from Evil and the Human Cognitive Condition," *Philosophical Perspectives 5--Philosophy of Religion*, 1991, ed. James B. Tomberlin (Atascadero, Ca.: Ridgeview Publishing Co., 1991), pp. 29-67.

Chapter VIII
A World of Divine Intervention

Critics who claim that God should have brought about a world with a lesser amount of evil sometimes propose that God should divinely intervene to save man from disastrous evils. In Part 11 of his *Dialogues*, David Hume talks about God making interventions in "the secret springs of the universe" and turning all the accidents to the good of mankind and rendering the whole world happy.1 A good God would see to it that a righteous armada of ships might always meet fair winds. Good princes would enjoy sound health and a long life. Persons born to power would have good tempers and virtuous dispositions. Hume does not demand that God make a world without any evil. He would be content if the Creator saw to it that man had a greater propensity to industry and labor, used his mind more and was more diligent in applying himself.2 He thinks that almost all of the moral as well as natural evils of human life come from idleness.

In the world of divine intervention God might see to it that a motorist caught in a snowstorm would have super traction and extra power and fuel to keep going and reach a safe refuge. When a volcano erupted, God might direct the lava harmlessly around homes and valuable property. He would miraculously rescue a mountain climber who slipped on a patch of ice. In a hurricane. He might make a tidal wave subside as soon as it threatened life. He would divert a shark away from a nearby swimmer. He might see to it that the wood, plastic and fabrics found in our home would not burn if threatened by fire. God might see to it that a car heading for us avoids our vehicle, or in the event the accident occurs, that our gas tank would not explode. If a farmhand fell into a piece of machinery, the machine would stop. We don't let children climb out on window ledges and play in refrigerators. If we are God's children, why does he not protect us from all like dangers? Why shouldn't God see to it that we do not suffer the tragic consequences of what we do?

According to some proposals for a better world, not all evils would have to be avoided. God would intervene in a limited way as Edward Madden and Peter Hare, the sceptical authors of *Evil and the Concept of God*, would have it. They argue that a good God should intervene from time to time to lessen the amount of evil in the world.3

H. J. McCloskey in his "God and Evil" claims that God could miraculously intervene to prevent some or even all moral evil, as he is said to do when he answers our prayers to prevent wars.4

Richard Rubenstein, the theologian mentioned in Chapter II, thinks that God should have intervened to protect the Jews during the holocaust. God cannot be perfect because he stood by and allowed man to inflict horrible evils upon his fellowman.

It is claimed that occasional rather than regular interventions could be made by God, thereby avoiding the more serious evils on the one hand and a pervading chaos on the other. God could enter the world to prevent natural calamities and some or all moral evil. G. Stanley Kane, in opposition to John Hick, claims that science, more or less as we know it, could exist in such a world. Steel and water would behave as they do in our world except in circumstances in which they might harm someone. Then they would act differently, and their pattern of action in such circumstances could be discerned and integrated into our scientific knowledge of them. Such science would not be rudimentary and crude, but much like our own. We would have many of the same substances as we have in the present world, and they would behave in much the same way as they do now. In such a world, we would still have regularities and this would allow us to carry out projects and study the world scientifically, much as we do today.5

Michael Martin, writing against Bruce Reichenbach's Evil and a Good God,6 mentions the possibility that we could grasp the miraculous regularity of God seeing to it that an avalanche will swerve around a skier or stop at his feet. If no human is in its path, it will proceed as we are accustomed to see it.

Surely, it is possible that we could grasp principles such as that an avalanche or earthquake would stop whenever a human life was in danger. Or, . . . that while animals could be electrocuted by touching a live wire, a human could do it without losing his/her life. It also is possible to grasp the idea that dogs or cats when they fall into deep water might drown, but humans be saved in one way or another.

However, the matter is not that simple. The first serious difficulty of such an interventionist demand arises from the virtually unlimited number of persons who would have a claim or would think they had a claim on special help from God as they face injury from others or from natural forces. The intervention would have to be not occasional or particular but on a very large scale. A limited number of interventions will not work. God would have to save every person in difficulty. An infinitely large number of adjustments would have to be made if all those who suffer terribly are to be relieved.

If God protects some from evil and allows others to suffer, how would it be determined as to who is to be saved and who is to be left to suffer? We would need here some criteria to determine who should be the recipient of God's saving action. How far should God go in his efforts? Why should God intervene to save some and let others perish? Can we make a distinction between the person caught in an earthquake and an innocent person being threatened by a mugger with a lethal weapon, or a truckdriver who skids off the road into a ravine? Where do we draw the line? The huge number of persons who would have to be protected from evil would result in a very strange world.7

A limited response from God would not be of much value. If God did not save everyone, then those who would have to suffer evil would be exposed to the added evil of the appearance of unfairness in the selection process. The possibility remains that an occasional or limited response would not necessarily affect the amount of evil in the world to a significant degree. The problem of evil might still remain.

Second, although we might be able to understand the modifications of natural law indicated above in the example of the skier, it seems certain that the huge number of people who are to be protected by divine interventions would result in an overwhelmingly complex created order. The problem here, as C. A. Campbell has pointed out, is that we would be confronted by an undependable world in which we could not predict the outcome of our actions.8 If God intervened to prevent calamities, the interventions would have to be on such a large scale as to undermine all confidence in the predictability of natural events.

We could never have a reasonable assurance that any particular natural sequence in which we were involved would not be interrupted by God because of some tragic consequence to others which God foresaw.9 When we set in motion a project we would never know when we would be hurting someone. We could never know for sure which person (if any) was being protected from harm when one of our endeavors was frustrated. Given the infinitely large numbers of people in danger anything that happens could be the result of this kind of protection. Any natural process in which we are involved might be frustrated by God because of some tragic consequence to others, a consequence which God foresaw and prevented.10

Our difficulty would be in perceiving regularity in nature. Even if the restructuring of this God-protected world would produce new and different regularities, it is difficult to see how man's

mind could get an effective grip on whatever order would be involved. The safety of humans as a principle of order in any such system would not be sufficient to afford us the reliability of our predictions. The problem is exacerbated beyond comprehension if we accept the view that animals must also be protected from evils.

John Hick calls such a state a dreamlike world in which we could not pursue any aims or goals.11 For it would work by a continual series of adjustments, of "special providences," and would be shot through with irregularities. It would be impossible to study it scientifically.

According to the English theologian, F. R. Tennant, the suspension of events painful to man would result in a chaos in which anything would succeed anything, as far as man could tell.12 Tennant cites Hume's view that if all general laws were superseded by particular volitions in the governance of the world, then no man could use his reason in conducting his own life.13 The sufferings inflicted upon humans are the outcome of the order and regularities in the world, which, if done away with, would make it impossible to use our reason.

John James, the author of *Why Evil* also sees a problem here. We would never be able to depend on our environment to give a calculated result. If God's intervention took the form of turning nature into a succession of miracles in order to avoid an occasional injury to man, a greater and a permanent evil would result.14

The complexity of such a world would prevent us from predicting the outcome of our actions. We would not have the needed confidence in the predictability of natural events, the necessary precondition of our undertaking a purposive project of any magnitude. Such a world would have a significant influence on the development of our moral life.

Every human being must act---he or she cannot just exist. Repeated actions give rise to virtues and vices as one develops morally. Along the way, we must become aware of the consequences of our actions which can at times help or hurt other persons, as well as ourselves. In order to develop morally, a person has to be able to predict the outcome of his actions. Without confidence in the regularity of natural events it is hard to see how man could have much of a moral life or how he could live at all.

As we try to make our way in the world and not waste our time and resources, we look for things that we can count on. Our moral life is based on experience in the real world--we know that a certain kind of conduct will bring about certain effects--and from this experience we learn to rely on things behaving in a regular way. My conviction that I should give food to a starving person is based on the conviction that food will alleviate the person's hunger. My decision that it is wrong to give that person a spoiled sandwich is based on the knowledge that contaminated food will harm him. As a person tries to develop in virtue, he remembers his past successes in attaining his goals without harm to himself and others, and his past failures. At times he realizes that while his intentions were right and respectable, the means he used to attain them were unnecessarily harmful to other people. He knows that a certain kind of conduct will bring unnecessary suffering to others as well as himself, and that he should resolve to avoid it in the future. In his moral development, the prediction and probability which play a large role are based on order. A physical order upon which we can rely on natural things to behave in a regular way is necessary for our moral development. Even David Hume admitted that, without a regular order of things, man could not rationally pursue his life. The basis of morality is not only the possibility of free choice but also rationality.

If all this is so, then it renders occasional and particular, as well as wide scale proposals for lessening the evil in the world, irrelevant. Such proposals, if actualized, do not guarantee a world of less evil than we have at present.

A third difficulty with both an occasional intervention and a wide scale intervention stems from the way in which a small requested change in our present world demands other changes and results in an alternative world of greatly increased complexity and problems. The elaboration of such a world is especially susceptible to error. It is too easy to let a contradiction or what leads to a contradiction slip by unnoticed in a world that depends on theoretical projections and imaginations alone, a world in which we do not have to feel hunger, thirst, exhaustion, remorse and betrayal--a world in which we cannot test our theories in a concrete, unforgiving situation.

It is generally accepted among men of science that, at times, the elimination of an apparently small element or a small modification of a process has far reaching consequences. Davies and Gribben mention the well-known remark that the flap of a butterfly's wings in Adelaide today can affect the weather in Sussex next week.15 The consequences of splicing genes, continued use of aerosol sprays, a small rise in temperature or in the level of the oceans, and like changes cause concern among the knowledgeable.16

Each apparently simple change has a multitude of consequences that have a domino effect on other things and other systems. An occasional change here and there, with a view toward eliminating an evil, has a long string of consequences. The problem is that few if any of these changes have been elaborated by those who advocate them in the world. Any critic who puts forth a world better than the present one is obligated to spell out his proposed changes and their implications in considerable detail. This requirement is at the basis of Bruce Reichenbach's criticism of McCloskey's proposal of a world with no disease.17 Until a detailed account of a new and better possible world is made, claims of its possibility are not to be considered seriously.

Any attempt to come up with a better world, if it succeeds, surely would result in a rewriting of the basic structure of the world. In such a science fiction kind of world, the status of humans very probably would be greatly altered. Ninian Smart is right when he warns us that fictions are not a good guide unless they are systematically elaborated.18 A world which is modified slightly to get rid of some evil is more easily suggested than elaborated, and suggestions leave much to be desired when great issues are at stake. This is a powerful objection to the demand that God intervene to prevent the many evils that humans suffer. The so-called "better worlds" are, as of now, imperfectly conceived rudimentary worlds that are in the class of unfinished fiction rather than reality.

A fourth possible difficulty is rooted in the notion of real possibility. Even though a radically restructured scientific world might be conceivable, its real possibility can be questioned. That is, the basis for that conceivability is the actual world and the concepts that we abstract from it. This suggests a certain dominant status to what we might call the real possibilities of the present world. In a sense, any world that changes the essential characteristics or properties of something in the present world can be judged as impossible. If our proposed world, for example, discards the rationality of man, then it would be an impossible world. However, if we see that it somehow follows, but not rigorously, from the nature of man that he must die, then, true, we can expect him to die. If we ask that God create a world in which man never dies, then we are asking for human nature to be changed. It is possible, of course, that the change be in the form of an addition, for example, that the omnipotent God can raise a being to a higher nature. Theists are accustomed to view God's action here as "supernatural."

A fifth difficulty for the view that God should intervene regularly to save us from disaster is the type of human being that such a world would tend to develop. If we were sure that God would save us from any and all disasters, then would not many of us develop into carefree, irresponsible human beings, unworried and unconcerned about doing things right, unconcerned about what

happens to others? Would we develop into people who would not care about avoiding famine in a poor country or a financial collapse in our own because God always would do something to save us, . . .or who would try hard to find the means of stopping an epidemic, for we would be sure that God would take care of it.

Why would people care for one another if nobody could suffer harm, if no matter what we did to or for a person, she would not suffer? It is as if all meaning would be taken from life. John Hick thinks that such a world would be one in which we would not try to progress in virtue. "Life would become like a dream in which, delightfully but aimlessly, we would float and drift at ease."19 Ninian Smart suggests that in a world in which humans would not harm each other, nobody might be courageous because nobody would feel fear. Nobody would resist temptations because there would be no temptations.20 If God saw to it that we do not suffer the tragic consequences of what we do, then the meaning and value of our actions and our lives would be downgraded severely.

A sixth difficulty is that the mere conceivability of such a world should not allow us to place an obligation on God to bring it about. Possibility, taken as conceivability or the lack of contradiction, is not sufficient of itself to ground an obligation on God's part to create things in a certain way. Rather, if God is to be truly free, it is his to give or not to give. It is actualized at God's will, accordingly as God freely chooses to do so or not. Nobody can demand that God actualize such a possibility under penalty of being called less than all powerful or less than all good. We cannot rightfully complain if he does not give us something that is not due to us in virtue of our nature.

In a word, the proposal for an occasional divine-intervention world as a better world than the present one is an unsatisfactory solution. Rather, one would have to propose not occasional but extensive intervention. But this would result in a state of affairs that would be fatal to the development of our human physical and moral capacities. Such a proposal would result in a restructured world, a world vastly different from our own, a world which no critic has presented in the necessary detail nor shown to be better than our own world.

In the following chapters, I will consider other modifications which supposedly result in the "better worlds" that the objectors claim God should have brought about.

Notes

1. David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, Essential Works of David Hume*, ed. Ralph Cohen, p. 370.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 371-372.

3. Edward Madden and Peter Hare, *Evil and the Concept of God* (Springfield, Ill.: C. C. Thomas, 1968).

4. H.J. McCloskey, "God and Evil," pp. 273-291.

5. G. Stanley Kane, "The Failure of Soul-Making Theodicy," *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion*, vol. vi (Spring, 1975), pp. 6-7.

6. Bruce Reichenbach, *Evil and a Good God* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982). Michael Martin, "Reichenbach on Natural Evil," *Religious Studies*, vol. 24, pp. 91-99.

7. If God protected everyone who was in danger, would this do away with death-defying feats such as car racing and mountain-climbing? If it would not do away with such activities it would surely diminish their status. The difference would be something like the tight-rope walker who performed with a net, as compared to one who walked without any protection. We might have a

situation in which God would save us once we asked to be saved, while withholding his saving influence until then, but would this take the excitement out of such activities?

8. Cf. C.A. Campbell, *On Selfhood and Godhood* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd.: 1957), pp. 299-300.

9. *Ibid*.

10. *Ibid*.

11. John Hick, *Philosophy of Religion*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973), p. 41.

12. F.R. Tennant, *Philosophical Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), vol. II, p. 202.

13. Tennant, p. 200. Hume, *Dialogues*, xi.

14. John James, *Why Evil?--A Biblical Approach* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1960), p. 39.

15. Paul Davies and John Gribben, *The Matter Myth* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), p. 41.

16. Cf. Errol Harris, *The Foundations of Metaphysics in Science* (New York: Humanities Press, 1965), p. 252.

17. Bruce Reichenbach, "Natural Evils and Natural Law: a Theodicy for Natural Evils," *International Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. xvi, no. 2 (June, 1976), pp. 179-196. Cf. H. J. McCloskey, "The Problem of Evil," *J. Bible and Religion*, vol. xxx, 3 (1962), pp. 187-197.

18. Ninian Smart, "Omnipotence, Evil, and Superman," *God and Evil*, ed. N. Pike (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964), pp. 103-112. P. 111.

19. Hick, *Philosophy of Religion*, p.41.

20. Ninian Smart, *ibid*.

Chapter IX
Possible Worlds Based on Greater Human Knowledge

We can conceive of worlds in which human knowledge is modified such that we are more ignorant or much more intelligent than we are. A possible objection to the assertion of the Creator's power or goodness is that the latter worlds are better than our own world and that a good and omnipotent God should have brought them into existence.

We do not find objectors advocating a world in which human knowledge was substantially degraded. Something of what it would be like for human intelligence to be effectively shackled can be seen in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*1 or, to a lesser degree in Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 4512*.2 In the former, quasi-humans are bred to serve and not to question, while in the latter, citizens are forbidden to read books and are discouraged from discussing serious issues. Someone whose capacity to abstract, ask questions, and formulate theories was seriously thwarted would be well on the way to losing her humanity. To seriously lower the degree of human intelligence would be effectively to annihilate the human person as we know her. In such a world we might not even come to ask the question whether evil is compatible with a good and omnipotent God.

The same could be said about a world in which we indulged ourselves in food, drink and sex, or dulled our sense of inquiry into matters such as our deeper motivations or the meaning of life. Although some might opt for a world in which humans are practically unable to formulate any idea of a better world and hence to articulate the problem of God and evil, most of us would not want such a world, nor would we blame God for not having brought it about.

A more serious problem arises from the possibility that our knowledge could be increased. Is it possible and would it be better if there were no apparently pointless, gratuitous, or haphazard evil, no evil for which we could see no reason?

In one kind of super-knowledge, world humans would know everything, every detail of every causal sequence, every detail of the past, present and future. This would allow us in effect to transcend time and virtually know everything in a single glance. It would radically change our way of living. The sense of expectation would have no meaning for such a person; there would be no mysteries to challenge her intellect. She could not gamble, for there would be no unknown outcomes upon which she could risk anything. Nor would she be inclined to test her limits in order to find out more about herself, for she would have all that information already. There would be no need for experiments or attempts to falsify a hypothesis or select the proper hypothesis to explain a fact, for, since we would know the future, we would have no need for efforts to predict. We would know everything we wanted to know. There would be no sense in talking about the degree of probability with which any natural process would reach its goal.

Nor would she be troubled by her inability to solve the problem of evil. She would see either the reason for God allowing evil in the world, or she would see the true nature of God as less than all-powerful, or as less than all-good, or that the good and all-powerful God did not exist. Or, she would see that what humans call evil is not really evil. In effect this would be saying that humans know everything there is to know, that we have infinite knowledge.

The problem with this kind of knowledge is that it leads us to think that humans actually are infinite, since we would expect infinite truth to be found only in an infinite being. Such powerful knowledge suggests that we would be talking not about a creature, but about the all-powerful omniscient Creator. The implication is that any being who penetrated the inner intelligible core of

the universe in such a way would have to be God. There is reason to think that a person with super-knowledge of this kind would become something other than human.

A less extreme type of world arises from the critic's objection to apparently pointless or gratuitous suffering. In it human knowledge would be increased to the extent that we would have precise knowledge that each instance of suffering was punishment for our mistakes or a stimulation to virtue. We would know that our suffering would be punishment for something we did wrong, e.g., a life of dissipation, or we would see that it would be a necessary means to the development of virtue. We would see clearly that the wicked are punished and that virtue is rewarded with happiness. All of us would know precisely what moral mistake led to this punishment or what kind of spiritual development would be ours in the future. We would see clearly the pattern of our development toward spiritual maturity, and we would understand why we should develop in that way. We would see how and why the evils we are asked to endure are constructive.

There would be no such evil as the haphazard suffering spoken about by John Hick--that kind of evil which is, as far as we can tell, useless, unjust, and randomly related to one's past deserts or to future soul-making. Haphazard suffering seems to fall upon men patternlessly, undeservedly, in excessive amounts, and without any apparent constructive purpose.

John Hick argues against a world without haphazard or apparently pointless suffering.3 He does not think that a world without haphazard evil would be a better world than the present one. It would be more a world of behavior modification in which a person is controlled, rather than one in which he is a freely responding agent. There would be no separation between vice and punishment, or between virtue and its reward. Persons would be strongly influenced, at each moment trying to avoid some punishment or to attain some reward. They would not be inclined to do what is right simply because it is right, to act out of a purely good will.

Hick is influenced by Kant's requirement that a morally good act should proceed from a good will and that one cannot act morally if one is motivated by fear or the hope of a reward. We need not accept this Kantian view--that a person acts non-morally when he acts according to his inclination or out of fear. And yet, we can agree that the person who does something because it is right, even though it demands a sacrifice of his own immediate interests, performs an act of greater virtue than the man who acts for his own advantage. We see time and time again persons suffering inconvenience and sacrificing time, money, and even health because they are devoted to admirable ideals. Hick maintains that a world such as our own, in which many innocent persons suffer without cause and many good persons receive no apparent reward, is a better world than the behavior modification model. It encourages us not to look for the reward or punishment, and thereby leads us to a more perfect kind of morality.

Hick's criticism is in line with traditional theology which teaches that a person acting out of a pure good will is thought to be acting out of the highest type of love, in which the object loved dominates. Here the self is downplayed, and all good is wished upon the beloved. If one looks upon doing what is right as an act of love for God who is her highest good, then she is not looking for a reward or for the relief of suffering. A world in which humans live and love in a relatively selfless sense is a better world than that in which one is ever on the lookout for what she can get or what evil she can avoid. To fault God for not bringing about a world in which we see clearly why we suffer is, then, unjustified. It is a weak objection.

Hick also claims that a world in which suffering was always seen to work for the good of the sufferer or for the punishment of his misdeeds would not provide the occasion for true compassion, massive generosity and self-giving, kindness, and good will which are among the highest values of a person's life.4 If we know that the suffering person is getting his just punishment or stands to

profit greatly from his inconvenience or pain, we are not inclined to be deeply sympathetic to him. Nor are we inclined to sacrifice greatly for him, or to organize others to relieve him of his distress.

Edward Madden and Peter Hare criticize Hick's theory of soul-making. Madden and Hare claim that it is possible for a husband to feel intense compassion for his wife who is undergoing labor pains, even though the pains are a necessary means to a desirable end. Also, one might feel compassion for a criminal as he is punished for a crime.5 Michael Martin notes how parents often feel great compassion for their child's suffering even though the suffering is necessary to correct misconduct. Nurses show great sympathy for patients who are suffering from needed operations.6 These authors claim that even though some evil might be necessary to develop compassion, the amount of it should be lessened.

The objectors miss the main point, for haphazard suffering gives rise to a kind of compassion that can hardly be compared with theirs. The husband's compassion for his suffering wife would be immensely increased if there was no reason why she had to suffer so, if, for example, the operation was botched, or while recovering, those taking care of her did not monitor her pain medication properly. The parents' compassion would be much more intense if their son was being punished unjustly and excessively by school authorities. A nurse's sympathy would be markedly different if she knew for sure that her patient's operation was unnecessary, or that her patient was dying from AIDS contracted in a blood transfusion.

Note the way we are inclined to feel when someone is going through a painful ordeal necessary for attaining a huge sum of money. Our heart goes out to him in only a limited degree. Should we feel intense sorrow for the person who, in an effort to become a millionaire, invests the totality of his assets in a highly speculative enterprise--and fails? Our intense compassion would go out to his wife and children who had no say in the matter and would then suffer unjustly, but not for him. Likewise, we do not lament the millionaire ballplayer who, separated from his family and living out of a suitcase nine months out of the year, is insulted by rude spectators and knocked on his backside by opponents from time to time. We have a good idea that his financial reward is well worth the inconvenience.

On the other hand, we are inclined to feel deeply for the young mother who is taken as a hostage by bank robbers and is incapacitated for life in the ensuing shoot out. She just happened to enter the bank as the robbers were leaving, and in the fracas she is struck in the spine and paralyzed. For her we feel a profound personal sympathy, a deep compassion, an unusually intense kindness, and a willingness to sacrifice something for this innocent victim of fate. Our response is a reasoned one, in that it would be significantly dissipated and decreased if we were convinced that she really deserved what she got, if, for example, she was the bank robber who just shot dead two young girls, or she was a prostitute with AIDS who did not care how many men she infected.

A similar response can be made to G. Stanley Kane's criticism of Hick's theodicy of soul-making. According to Kane, soul-making and virtue can be had without extreme and haphazard suffering.7 Courage, perseverance, and persistence in the face of difficult obstacles, for example, could be developed in a freely chosen difficult project, such as writing a doctoral dissertation or training for the Olympic games.

On the contrary, however, a significantly deeper degree of virtue is demanded in someone who has no choice, who has to endure a debilitating disease, a terminal illness, or in someone who has just lost a spouse in an accident. The courage of the athlete is manifested for an afternoon or a season, but the man with a terminal illness is in a game that never ends. No athlete today competes in a game that ends only with his death. No athlete is forced to live like a person who struggles with a terminal illness. After the game, an athlete takes a shower, goes out for a good meal with

his friends, re-lives a victory or tries to forget an embarrassing defeat. A person with a progressive illness cannot easily shower it off; he takes it with him wherever he goes. There is no "minor difference in value" between the virtue required of those who freely take on difficult tasks and those who have no choice but to bear the burdens of disasters, accidents, and diseases.

If the dissertation writer succeeds, he can enjoy the fruits of his work; if time runs out or if he decides to pursue another path, he goes on living, sometimes disappointed, at other times in peace. Not so in the case of the victim of terminal cancer, who is confronted by a disappointment that does not allow him to pick up and go on living. In effect he is faced with a sentence of death. It is also hard to see how the courage of the dissertation writer's wife is of the same degree as that asked of a woman who single handedly must care for a brain-injured child for ten or fifteen years. We cannot rightly compare the wife of a failed doctoral candidate with the girl who just lost her husband in a mine accident.

Consider the kind of world in which everyone knew that he was getting the suffering he deserved as punishment, or was getting the evil as a means to a generous reward. Would that not be a cold world in which people would have less incentive to care for anyone else? Everybody would be taken care of in such a world, so why should I worry about others? There would be no need for intense feelings for the person who suffers. For these reasons, we cannot easily dismiss the attempts to justify the evil in the world on the grounds that it intensifies our appreciation of life and calls us to greater virtue.

It is not at all clear that in a world devoid of unavoidable suffering, humans would develop a life with a comparable amount of virtue as we find in the present world. There is much to be said for Hick's view that suffering has to be unmerited, inequitous, pointless, and incapable of being morally rationalized if it is to arouse and evoke the truly great human virtues mentioned above.8

Another conceivable world in which human knowledge is increased can be developed on the suggestion that God should have made a world in which he cogently convinces men of his existence and tells them clearly of his policies. Hare and Madden demand that God should force his existence upon man as clearly as does the existence of the natural environment, that God should be unhidden and unveiled, that nature should constitute unambiguous evidence of God's existence. They claim that any top executive who fails to inform, unmistakably, all his employees of his existence and policies is either a fool or a knave.9 If he does not do so, then he should not expect to get effective intelligent co-operation from his subordinates. In this analogy, God is the top executive who fails to inform unmistakably all his employees of his policies. He is then either a fool (who is powerless because he does not know how to deal with people) or a knave (because, able but not willing to give guidance, he allows them to do evil). It is no wonder that men do not do his will. Surely, God should have made a better world.

This analogy does not work for many reasons.

First, the aim of a business enterprise is to make a profit by providing goods and services. But what if God's goal in creation is different, namely, the free development of creatures who freely choose to turn to their Creator and are not forced in any way? In this scenario, God would not be a knave or a fool when he fails to inform his creatures of his existence. And, as his existence is not forced upon humans, then his policies likewise are subject to questioning and interpretation.

Second, the goal of an organization is the determining factor in its operation. It takes priority over its smooth running. Moreover, efficiency is a two-edged sword; everything can work smoothly on behalf of a goal that is evil rather than good. An efficient rescue team can save a human life, but, as we can see in the holocaust literature, an efficient killing operation can cause massive evil. In the holocaust, good would have been served and evil thwarted by an executive

who sent out unclear policies, or by subordinates who were not sufficiently convinced of the propriety of such policies. The goal of God's plan for the universe might be that man come to acknowledge or reject him freely, not efficiently. The efficiency or non-efficiency of the process would be irrelevant. The freedom path might be wasteful, but it has a certain warmth and spontaneity, a beauty which we experience, for example, in love freely given. This alone would make it more desirable than a system marked by efficiency. At times we are quite willing to trade off efficiency for a higher goal.

Then too, how can we fault the infinite Creator God who has untold resources? Wasting things might be wrong and to be avoided for limited beings such as ourselves, but how can we be so sure that the unlimited Creator who dominates all existence also has that obligation?

Third, there is much to be said for the increased value of good actions performed by persons who have a great degree of genuine freedom. If freedom is a perfection, then the person who freely chooses to search out who this God is, who some accept and others deny--the person who after such a search freely accepts a God who was not forced upon him, and freely does what is right--this is the kind of person God should create. On the other hand, the evil done by someone who knows very clearly that his act is wrong and that the indubitably existent God has forbidden it, manifests a much greater malicious character than the person who, through weakness, fools himself, fails, and does evil. The evil that men do is less evil if done partly out of ignorance. An evil act done in the presence of one's superior takes on the character of contempt for authority and is a more serious wrong.

Fourth, policies that are spelled out in great detail can be an effective barrier to the development and fulfillment of a firm's subordinates. A detailed "manual of life" set out in "how to do it" fashion would strike hard at human freedom and initiative, and seriously downgrade the use of our reason in moral matters. We would scarcely propose as a better world one in which a robot-like character or one who merely obeyed exact directives was needed to implement the prescriptions. In ordinary life, a person who knows exactly what to do because he is told precisely, who has no authority to exercise discretion, is just another cog in a machine. The person who must apply principles and weigh the pros and cons, the person who must interpret and wrestle with difficult decisions of policy, has dignity and status.

Fifth, not every executive who does not show all his cards is necessarily a knave. It is not unusual for a top man in an organization to keep some things to himself at times. If, for example, he is trying to find out the real character of certain candidates for advancement, he might keep his intentions secret, lest the candidates disguise their behavior and appear as someone other than their true selves. The person who merely does what he is told to do in an effort to please a superior might get high marks for obedience, but his action would have greater value if he acts out of a deep conviction of his own, freely arrived at. A top executive does not spell out everything to his subordinates.

Sixth, an executive often demands a type of faith in those under him. He cannot be forever involved in trying to convince his subordinates or in trying to make clear some policy or other. We all know some subordinates who would not understand a policy or who would have trouble applying it no matter how great an effort to clarify was made. Moreover, prejudice, closemindedness, pride, selfishness, and the like can blind a person to even the most forceful unambiguous message.

In Madden and Hare's world, humans would not be able to get away from God and be taken up with the world itself. A person would be unable to put God out of his mind, to act as if God did not exist. God's existence would be automatically and undeniably evident to everyone. John Hick

questions the better status of such a world. He defends the present world with its present type of human knowledge. He claims that it is fitting that the world both veils God and reveals him at the same time and does not unambiguously lead man to God.

Richard Swinburne gives us another reason why it is better that the existence of God be somewhat veiled: If God were as clearly present as our father or spouse, then a person would not have a genuine choice of destiny. God would be too close for them to work out their own destiny. God would be too evident a member of our community.10 If the prospective evildoer saw God face to face, he would have every reason for conforming to God's will; his freedom would be lessened. He would suffer as he hurt someone, for he would be very much aware that God was present. If God were so present to us as the person in front of us, we would be in the position of the child who cannot get away from his parent. And, as we have said, if a child, deliberately, in front of his parent does something clearly forbidden, his action would be an outright manifestation of contempt.

Hick maintains that the possibility of our considering (to some extent) the world as if there were no God allows man to come to God by a mode of knowledge that involves a free interpretative response. The world that veils God and reveals him at the same time is as it should be, for man's mind should be able to rest in the world itself without passing beyond it to its Maker; there should be some epistemic distance between God and man--we should be able to consider the world "as if there were no God."

This world is a better world, one in which humans have the freedom to become aware of God, to acknowledge God or reject him through a free interpretative act which we call faith.11 A world with a place for faith is a better world than one in which faith is unnecessary in such a quest.12 We can go this far with Hick: Surely, we need a kind of faith as we go about our daily lives. And faith is helpful when we are inflicted with haphazard suffering. It is not unreasonable to think, then, that it is better to acknowledge God's existence, while maintaining a certain freedom to deny it. The value of acknowledging God's existence would be considerably lessened if his presence were as evident to us as is, for example, the material world.

Another reason that has some force in the defense of a world of haphazard suffering concerns gratitude. Apparently meaningless suffering stimulates the virtue of gratitude. The very meaning of random and haphazard suffering involves our inability to predict it, as well as to understand the reason for such suffering once it has occurred. We know that an unforeseen accident can happen to any one of us at any time. Upon reflection, this can evoke in us a profound appreciation for the many happy, trouble-free days that go along according to our plans. If all suffering were deserved as punishment or always seen as a necessary means toward something good for the sufferer, then we would lose the sense of being the recipient of benefits we might not really deserve. The world would lose a significant quantity of warmth. We might be grateful for our own existence, but in the day-to-day life of the world everything else would be cut and dry, a reward, a punishment, or a means to our own perfection. It is possible to conceive of a person being uneasy, bored, perhaps bitter when confronted by a world in which one has no chance to freely accept or reject the meaning of what was happening to one. On the other hand, suffering that is a mystery challenges us and allows us the freedom to develop or to fail.

To the believer the need for gratitude can be seen clearly when we realize that our creation was not like a business merger in which both parties bring assets, and an agreement is hammered out. There was no bargaining table--we humans brought nothing to the scene of creation. In a sense, we are in a weak negotiating position. It is more realistic than subservient to think that we should be grateful for whatever we have been given.

Earlier I said that a world in which everyone knew why he was suffering a particular evil would be one of less intense feelings for one another, and that apparent gratuitous evil intensifies our appreciation of life. This points to the important noetic aspect of good and evil: good and evil are correlatives--if there were no evil, then we could not appreciate the existence of good. Charles Hartshorne asks, "But could `good' mean anything in a world in which any contrasting term would be totally excluded by omnipotent power."13 Hartshorne is concerned with a kind of impoverishment of the world which would result from man's not being able to appreciate what `good' means. If there were no evil, man would be oblivious to the dichotomy of good and evil, hence would not appreciate either. Aquinas puts his finger on the pivotal factor here: evil has to be experienced. Sick people best appreciate how great good health is; they know good better, because they experience evil or bad health and more easily see one in the light of the other. Our desire for good grows more ardent as we continue to suffer evils.14 If a person never experienced moral evil, if a person never was betrayed or treated unjustly, then how could he appreciate the full meaning of good or evil?

We have all heard the claim that a person does not have to experience something in order to appreciate, value, and deal with it. A doctor does not have to have cancer or tuberculosis in order to treat properly patients with those illnesses. A CPA need not himself have declared bankruptcy in order to guide a client through a difficult business crisis. A citizen does not have to commit a crime in order to know what it is to be a criminal.

This is true up to a point, but in a certain way it is deceptive and incomplete. A doctor's help for his terminally ill patient is often limited to physical remedies. The business consultant who has never gone through a bankruptcy might not be fully aware of the psychological effects of a business failure. The citizen does not feel the rebellion and disgrace that sometimes permeates the heart of the prison inmate.

In contemporary medicine we have an actual case in which a doctor's knowledge was markedly advanced after he contracted an illness about which he was writing. Sir Zachary Cope, M.D. in the preface to the 14th edition of his well-known medical work on the abdomen15 says that since the last edition was published, he had an attack of acute cholecystitis which taught him several points that were new to him. Here we see how the actual experience of a disease by an expert enabled him to make an even greater contribution to an already authoritative work. Similar invaluable knowledge might be had by the rehabilitated criminal counselor. It is almost inconceivable that a CPA experience bankruptcy, but he might have comparable knowledge if he was motivated to enter the profession by the experience of his father having to file a "Chapter Eleven".

It is not surprising, then, that a frightening experience of evil can shake a person and set in motion a process that results in a profound re-evaluation of what one considers good, a deeper appreciation of life. The Andes survivors experienced something such as this after their plane crashed in the Chilean *cordillerra*.16 In a harsh environment, they stayed alive for ten weeks by eating the flesh of their dead comrades. They claimed that the suffering they went through led them to appreciate as never before their families, their fiancees, their faith in God and their homeland. After their rescue they were determined to work more seriously, be more devout, and to give more time to their families. They despised fashionable clothes, nightclubs, flirtatious girls and idle living.17

Soldiers who have been in battle tell us (when they can bring themselves to talk about it) that one cannot describe in words the horror that soldiers goes though. Such men have a unique knowledge of evil--they know death as possibly "my own," what existentialist writers talk about

as causing difficulty for the ordinary person. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross tells how a person with a terminal illness is profoundly affected.18 We know that the person with a serious but non-terminal illness feels his mortality in a more intense way than when he was healthy. With good reason we ask whether someone born into a wealthy family and provided with all his desires can realize what it means to be abjectly poor, with no hope of attaining the amenities of life so many take for granted. It seems clear that a deep appreciation of what it means to be alive requires that we have or be exposed to a first-hand experience of what can go wrong.

In conclusion, there are too many difficulties with a so-called "better world" in which God is expected to provide humans with much more deep and clear knowledge about reality. It is not that the world would not be better if we had more knowledge of ourselves and our world, but this knowledge is something we have to work for--the effort is part of our destiny. Insight into mystery is part of our goal; to find out why evils happen to us, how we can overcome them, and how we can bring good out of them gives our lives tremendous value. There is much to be said for John Hick's apparently pointless suffering leading to the stimulation to virtue, and his role for "epistemic distance" in the human life. The attack on God's goodness or power that arises out of a demand for a greater gift of human knowledge fails. It is highly dubious whether such a world is really "better" than the one we have. It seems, too, that in order to appreciate adequately the reality of what is good we must have a significant, intense experience of evil.

Notes

1. Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (New York: Bantam Books, 1958).

2. Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 4521* (New York: Ballantine, 1953).

3. John Hick, "God, Evil and Mystery," *Religious Studies*, 3 (1967-1968), pp. 544-545. *Evil and the God of Love* (Great Britain: Collins, 1968), pp. 370-371. *God and the Universe of Faiths* (Glasgow: Collins, 1977), pp. 53-61.

4. Hick, *ibid*.

5. *Evil and the Concept of God*, p. 88.

6. *Atheism--A Philosophical Justification* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), p. 424.

7. G. Stanley Kane, "The Failure of Soul-Making Theodicy."

8. John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love, ibid., God and the Universe of Faiths, ibid*.

9. Madden and Hare, *Evil and the Concept of God* , p. 114.

10. Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 211-212.

11. Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths*, pp. 53-61.

12. Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, pp. 296, 317-318

13. Charles Hartshorne, *Natural Theology for Our Time* (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court, 1967), p. 82.

14. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, trans. Vernon Bourke (Garden City: Doubleday, 1956) III, Part I, 71.

15. Sir Zachary Cope, M.D., *The Early Diagnosis of the Acute Abdomen*, 14th ed. Preface (London: Oxford University Press, 1972).

16. Cf. Piers Paul Read, *Alive, the Story of the Andes Survivors* (New York: Avon, 1975).

17. *Ibid.*, p. 312.

18. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, *On Death and Dying* (New York: Macmillan, 1969).

Chapter X
A World with Diminished Human Freedom

Another world that critics might propose as better than this one is one in which human freedom is downgraded or even eliminated. This appears to be the effect of Antony Flew's claim that God could have created a world in which humans were free but never sinned. Hence, God could have made a world with much less evil in it, and if he is good, then he should have.

One problem with this objection arises from Flew's compatibilist view of human freedom as presented in his article, "Divine Omnipotence and Human Freedom,"1 a freedom which is hardly genuine, but rather subject to determinism. Flew contends that even though a human action is predictable, foreknowable, and explainable in terms of caused causes, it can still be free. An action can be both freely chosen and fully determined by caused causes. For example, a young couple who marry without social or parental pressure do so freely. Murdo knows his own mind and knows that he had other possible alternatives to marrying Mairi, or other things to do; he is genuinely free. Even if his action were predictable, such foreknowledge would not show that he did not act freely, that he did not decide for himself, or never chose between alternatives. Flew maintains that while clear evidence of obstruction, pressure, or lack of alternatives would be evidence of a lack of freedom, there is no contradiction involved even if every human action and decision has physiological causes. The young man marries the girl freely, even though he would never have married her if his endocrine glands were not in such and such a state.

Flew's problem stems from the claim that the action is fully determined or completely determined by the physiological causes mentioned. Flew is committed to the possibility that a freely chosen action is fully determined by such causes.2 This "fully determined" status is an Achilles heel. Flew says that one's glands are not other people taking decisions out of Murdo's hands and railroading him into action against his will.3 On the contrary, however, although one's glands are not other people, they are part of the physical world and, as such, are connected to external agents that might effectively determine their action at a particular time. No doubt, we are affected by our physical and social environment. If we are "fully determined" by such factors, then our freedom is non-existent. Even if the condition of one's endocrine glands would be classed as a necessary rather than a sufficient condition of our action, the last necessary condition functions as a determining cause, as when a lighted match is all that is needed for gas fumes to explode. In this sense, if you were given a drug that caused you to jump out a tenth story window, then your action would not be free.

Flew asks, "If this is not a case of Murdo deciding, then what is; then what would be meant by `Murdo deciding?'" The answer is quite clear. A genuine case of Murdo deciding would be one in which he was not fully determined by external causal influences, one in which his alternatives were real and not merely alternatives in his opinion, one in which the causal influences were such that they allowed Murdo himself to act as a cause, to determine which alternative to choose.

The most we can get out of Murdo's "free" action is that he thinks he is not forced by parental pressure, the condition of his glands, etc. In all actuality, if he is fully determined, then he is not able to help himself; though he thinks he is free, he might be without alternatives. Flew's position seems to make man's freedom depend on what he thinks or feels, while the possibility remains that the person is the victim of a cruel joke.

If I had almost exhaustive knowledge of you, an unsophisticated immature bumpkin, and was consciously manipulating you to invest your life savings with me, you might think that you are

doing so freely, but in fact you would not be free. We might talk in terms of freely doing this or that, of freely deciding between two alternatives. However, any truly aware person knows that he was possibly unduly influenced by this or that agent. If he confirms such suspicions, then Flew's common usage of "freely acted" and "freely decided" would be paradigm cases of man being deceived or fooled into thinking he was free, when actually he was determined all the time. People are manipulated at times.

The upshot of Flew's compatibilism would be that whatever humans do would be attributed to the omnipotent Creator. God would be directly responsible for the theft, murder, and abuses for which we ordinarily blame man. He would then be omnipotent but not good. Humans would be automatons not directly responsible for evil actions.

It appears more reasonable to see a person's endocrine glands, the state of his liver, the weather, peer pressure, and the like as only partial causes of the person's action. We can still talk in terms of "determined" and "caused" here, and still avoid rigid determinism. There is no objection to the view that Murdo marrying or Joe joining the Navy were free actions partially determined by many factors. If the young man knows his own mind and exerts the final element of causality, then we can say that an action is freely chosen and yet caused or determined. It is only that the last determination comes not from endocrine glands or some external agent but from the person himself.

A second problem with the objection that God could have arranged things such that humans are truly free but always choose what is morally right arises from Flew's use of the difference between human natural and "heavenly" status. As examples of the possibility that free human beings might be tempted and yet not fall into sin, Flew points to the blessed in heaven. The blessed in heaven are characterized by a human goodness which implies that they are still exposed to temptation and capable of sin, but they are truly saved and safe from moral evil. They are still free, and hence, it is logically possible that a human be capable of sin and yet be protected by God from sin.4 The inference is that if this is possible, then the all powerful God should be able to do it, and if he does not do it then he is not good.

In response to this part of the objection to the good and all powerful God two points can be made. The first is that there is another way of looking at freedom, as we find in Aquinas who also distinguishes between the basis of human freedom on earth and its basis in heaven. According to him, the blessed are free because a free being, even though he is not determined by a necessity of force, can be determined by a necessity of inclination and still be free.5 In this way God is free, even though he is necessitated to seek out and cannot not will his proper end, namely his goodness. God's will, like any natural appetite, seeks out its end with necessity. The human will, likewise, is ordered to the highest good. While on earth a person does not see clearly which particular goods lead to the highest good, in heaven one has that knowledge and sees clearly that God is the end to be loved above all else. This enables one to avoid sin while retaining one's freedom.

So Flew is right when he claims that a free human action is predictable, foreknowable, and explainable in terms of caused causes. He is wrong when he thinks that humans can be so determined in their present, earthly status. The causes determining a free action are metaphysically internal, rooted in a natural inclination. In this view both God and man can be internally determined and still be free. However, the determination applies only in circumstances in which the agent is in the presence of its proper object. The important point is that we cannot talk of humans being both free and determined in this world, where our earthly status prevents us from seeing our goal clearly. Human free choice is ordered to the absolute good, and in this world is in a state of indifference with regard to innumerable actions. We on earth are not in contact with the formality

of the universal and perfect good, namely, God himself. Hence, we can go astray and choose evil.6 The present earthly context leads us to mistake at times a particular good for the universal good. Although freedom and determinism by necessity of inclination are compatible when an agent is in the presence of one's proper goal, in our present life where necessity of force applies one cannot be both free and determined.

For a creature to be free and naturally sinless is a contradiction, for "naturally" refers to one's status in this world where one's actions are directed toward a particular and not the universal good.7 In this world, we do not see our universal good, and hence we can make the wrong choice and do evil. Free choice in humans lacks the stable principles which would prevent one from failing.8 Although a person naturally desires happiness in an undetermined and general way, one can do evil when one chooses the wrong particular good, thinking that it truly leads to that happiness.9

The second point is the importance of the distinction between the possible as conceivable, or logically possible, and the possible as real. When we talk in terms of what is owed to us, we are in the realm of real possibility. So if we suffer the loss of something, we expect to have by virtue of being human, e.g. the use of a good leg, we are inclined with apparent justification to seek a reason why God allowed such an evil. If the reason does not make sense, then we have a problem and are tempted to complain that God is not good or not powerful. However, we have much less reason, in fact no reason at all, to complain to God for not freely giving us something that is not due to us by virtue of one's nature. For example, we have no reason for complaining that God has not given man the strength of a lion.

If Aquinas is on the mark concerning human freedom, then Flew's mistake is in demanding that the good and powerful God bestow upon humans a heavenly status. According to Aquinas, to be both free and determined in this way is not a state owed to us. No creature can have free choice naturally confirmed toward the good. Flew's problem stems from this impossibility that no human being is owed heaven in virtue of her nature. A person becomes blessed because God alone has given one that gift. Flew mentions how the Church claims that God has protected the Blessed Virgin from all sin. Indeed, it is conceivable that she be free and protected from sin, but her actualized protected status on earth is due to a free gift from God. It is not due to one by virtue of one's own nature. Likewise, saintly persons who are protected from sin on earth are protected by special non-natural help. The saints in heaven are in no danger, because they are in the presence of their universal good which necessarily attracts them.

The same type of answer can be given to H. J. McCloskey, another critic who proposes that God could have drastically reduced the amount of moral evil or eliminated it entirely if he made man more strongly inclined to do what is good. We have seen McCloskey's position: that God could have created man with a strong bias toward good and a world that is less conducive to the practice of evil. For example, God could have seen to it that self-interest was a less powerful driving force in us.10

In reply to this author, we know what a human being is by observing that person in the world that we know. As we find someone in this world, that person reveals what she is and has been up to now. That a human being never does evil or never dies are not characteristics that we can attribute to her as such, as far as we can tell. That humans can do moral evil and that they die are characteristics found whenever and wherever men and women are found. True, of course, we have the possibility of achieving great virtue, but this is not the same as having it without effort.

Being protected from sin, being created with a stronger bias toward good or with self-interest as a less powerful driving force is not something that we expect to find in man as such. It is, indeed,

conceivable, but something is added. God could have made a world in which human beings were free, were tempted, and did not sin, but this would be a pure gift. Possibility taken as the lack of contradiction is not sufficient of itself to lay an obligation on God to create things in a certain way.

Anything beyond human powers that we might be but are not, any possible radical change in the world that we cannot as human achieve, we have no right to claim. What man is not, the possible worlds that he can conceive, cannot be the basis of a demand that anyone, including God, bring them into existence. What God can give in the order of grace is, indeed, conceivable, but can in no way be the foundation of a demand that he bring about this or that kind of world. Nobody can demand that God actualize such a possibility under penalty of being called less than all powerful or less than all good.

Flew and McCloskey ignore this restriction and think that God should bring about anything God is able to do. They gloss over the distinction between the order of nature and the order of grace. The latter order allows God to give something freely, to give something which is not owed to the receiver of the gift, or something that goes beyond the nature of the receiver.

The nature of a gift is at the heart of the matter. If we insist that God is obliged to give that gift of grace, then we destroy its nature as a gift. How can it be a gift, if it had to be given? What if a man demands sex from his woman and she reluctantly complies? What if she demands flowers and he grudgingly presents them?

God should have the perfection of being able to genuinely give something, that is, to give it of his own free will. What God gives is his to give or not to give. It is actualized at God's will, accordingly as God freely chooses to do so or not. To be able to give something freely is a perfection which we cannot deny to the Divinity. If we claim that he is not good or not powerful because he did not give it, then we effectively deny that perfection to him.

Hence, we cannot say that God is not good because, although he could have given each of us a special power to avoid doing any evil action, he did not do so. What God can do in the order of grace is conceivable, but in no way can it be the foundation of a demand that he bring about this or that kind of world.

In answer to the question, "Could God have made a world of men who did not sin?", we have to answer, "Yes." However, this possibility must be taken in the context of the power of God to give a creature something beyond its own capacities. It does not give rise to any basis for a demand that God do so. This squares with Plantinga's position, as long as we understand the latter as applying to the world as we find it, i.e. without special help.

One might object that, because he does not create a human that does not do evil, God is not as magnanimous as he might be, and since he is all perfect, he should be magnanimous in the ultimate degree. The problem with this proposal, again, is that it would effectively deny God's freedom. In asking for something that is not owed a creature in virtue of his nature, it expands almost indefinitely the limits to what we can demand of God. Giving priority to the magnanimity principle would lead us to demand that God bring about a creature that has every power and differs from himself by only one characteristic. This would be a strange demand which would contradict the idea of a supererogatory action which we maintain God is free to actualize.

That God because of his magnanimity should have created humans who could not sin gives rise to another problem: it would place on God an obligation to create better and better worlds, which in turn would mean that he would be determined somewhat by conceivable creatures, by the kind of world to be created. This is in opposition to the nature of action as it could be applied to God: that nothing can satisfy his will or determine him other than himself. No conceivable world

can be presented as the world which God has to create. But this would be the case if God allowed the type of creature to function as a determinant of his creative act.

Flew's compatibilism and use of the natural and heavenly status distinction undermine his objection that God should have brought about a world in which humans were free but did not sin. There still remains, however, the possibility that we humans be given a lesser degree of freedom. Even if we do not have to see God as necessarily bringing about a world in which no human could do evil, there is always the possibility that we would be better off if God had created us with a restricted freedom, and, hence, that he should have done so. This leads us to ask "How much freedom should we be willing to trade away for a world with a lesser amount of evil? To what degree should God limit our freedom so as to reduce the amount and intensity of evil?"

Central to this issue is that human freedom is relative and limited. It is safe to say that we are not absolutely free to do anything we can think of doing; we act within certain more or less defined limits. True, we can strive to surpass our limits in Jonathan Seagull fashion, but when we say that we are free, we do not mean, for example, that we are now free of the laws that govern our body and our mind. We are not free to take certain powerful chemicals into our body and live, nor can we fly through the air or live under the sea as we do on land. In any action we are subject to the causal influence of the environment and of the food and fluid we take into our body, to say nothing of the persuasive force of ideas that we read or hear.

Freedom is not a question of all or nothing. We might be free to make non-moral decisions? what to eat for dinner or what to wear to work, whether or not to go for a walk, whether to read this book rather than some other. Even the prisoner under a life sentence is free to curse or to accept his fate, to be kind or harsh to his fellow inmates, to plan an escape or to compose a poem. He is free to put his left sock on first in the morning and free to choose the subject of his cell daydreams. Such a freedom would be attenuated, a less powerful, lower level type of freedom.

Our freedom is lessened but not lost when, for example, we are snowed-in during a blizzard or must put into port during a storm at sea. At such times, we turn to options that are still available to us. The oppressed and hunted, though they are acutely aware of when and to whom they can speak freely, know that sometimes it can be done. At times we can use our remaining freedom to break through the limits placed on us by nature or by others, as when those manipulated and used by the powerful revolt, overthrow their oppressors, and right the order of justice. Neither before nor after the revolution have such persons lost all human freedom.

The objectors demand that the Creator bring about a world in which humans would be free in a significantly weaker sense, that would place more restrictions on what we can do to each other. Some might claim that God should have seen to it that man could not wage war, betray, torture, insult, and humiliate his fellowman, steal large sums of money or property, rape or murder his fellow human beings. Some might ask that man be not able to commit genocide, to abduct a child or spouse, to steal a car, to cheat in a business deal, to be greedy, to be callous, to be niggardly toward the poor. Others might ask that it be impossible for man to become so insane that he guns down the innocent. A world might be proposed in which nobody could be unfaithful to another or could physically harm another. Such evils are the consequences of the type of human freedom in our present world.

John Hick stands firm against a weakened human freedom and defends the powerful degree of freedom that we have in the present world. According to Hick the evil that we suffer in life plays a role in our development. Our task in life is to develop virtues like courage, responsibility, compassion, and care for one another. By exercising the type of freedom we have in the hard and challenging present world, we pursue that goal. According to Hick, God brought humans into this

world as immature beings who were to use their freedom to develop and perfect themselves into his likeness. The possibility of real setbacks, failures, frustrations, and disasters is a necessary condition for the real meaning of our morality.11

There is much to be said for such a view. If the world were such that no evil could do harm us, if nobody could hurt another person, then we would never need help or consideration from another. This would eliminate obligations to help others and opportunities to increase in virtue. It would severely limit the number of possible moral actions. If God creates a type of person that is preserved from moral evil, then, as the scope of human freedom is severely narrowed, the value of freely chosen good actions would be diminished significantly.

David Griffin, who, as a process philosopher challenges the traditional idea of God's omnipotence, nevertheless agrees with the powerful traditional emphasis on the value of truly free human actions. God intends that we have an increasing capacity for value realization.12 Great values are not possible without the risk of great suffering.13 If we had the freedom of chimpanzees or cats, creatures with a lesser freedom, then we would realize the types of values these creatures enjoy. With a lower degree of freedom we would have the capacity to realize far fewer values. We humans have a "tremendous capacity for enjoying an enormous range of values," but along with this goes the capacity for hurting others.14 Most people, seeing the choice between dangerous human beings, or no human beings would prefer the former.15

If we eliminate the possibility of doing wrong in a context, do we not remove the value of a good action done in that context? If we diminish the possibilities of doing evil, then we diminish the value of the opposed good actions. If we were not able to hurt or persecute others, then the value of treating others kindly and with justice would be downgraded. Although our world is very complex and demanding, it is questionable whether we would really want a world in which no person responsibly would be able to treat another unkindly, to cheat, or to be unfaithful.

John Hick's powerful human freedom extends to the acceptance of God. The possibility of our considering to some extent the world as if there were no God leaves man free to come to God by a mode of knowledge that involves a free interpretative faith response. Our world veils God and reveals him at the same time, thus allowing for this free faith response.16 Assuming that God does exist and that it is right to acknowledge him and wrong to deny him, if we were not free but were forced to accept God, then the value of our acceptance would be seriously downgraded.

We have said above that we can strive to surpass our limits, that we can use our present freedom to break through the limits placed on us by nature. We can try to refine our knowledge of the world, discover new modifications of nature's laws and thereby increase our own power and freedom. We can rightly work to make the world better and enjoy whatever progress we achieve as the result of deserved diligent effort with all its value. Granted that we would not have the same challenges to virtue as we would have in our dangerous world, we would still rightfully bask in the light of rewards truly earned. It would be the fulfillment of what some would call our destiny: to become ever more free, to free ourselves from the obstacles that confront us in our present challenging world.

An important consequence of genuine and powerful human freedom can be seen in Alvin Plantinga's *Free Will Defense*. According to Plantinga, if we are free in this way, then there are worlds that God cannot bring into existence; we determine to some extent the "shape" of the world; how the world exists, what it is like, depends in a way on how we use our freedom. This applies to both non-moral and moral actions.

The import of this is the possibility that in any and every world of free beings God would actualize, there might be one or more persons who would do one or more evil actions. A person,

indeed, everybody, might suffer from "transworld depravity." That is, if God creates humans as genuinely free, then not only persons could sin in any world, but also any number of persons could sin in any world. One can easily see the implications of this. We have the freedom to do evil even of the worst kind. We have the power to make the world a "hell on earth."

In this view it is also possible that God cannot actualize a world in which there was less moral evil than in our own world, and the same amount of good. If we are truly free (which must be interpreted as "if we have this degree of freedom"), then it would be wholly up to us to determine whether we do what is right or what is wrong.17

Of course these ideas have to be understood with the proviso that God does not give humans something they do not deserve in virtue of their nature. Or, . . . that God can annihilate the world at any time and bring about a world vastly different from our own. There is nothing to prevent God from taking away man's freedom sometime in the future and making him a "quasi-human" or automaton. This would amount to annihilating him and making him into something with a different nature. It remains true, however, that there are certain things God cannot do, as long as this is the only world he will create and as long as he does not give humans a special gift.

If Plantinga is right, and we exclude the possibility of God giving a free gift which humans do not deserve in virtue of their nature, then a position such as Flew's asks us to accept an impossibility: that humans are free and that it is possible that God see to it that they always must do what is morally right. If we accept the possibility of a state of affairs that includes grace, then the request is possible but out of order.

Finally, our present capacities for bringing about good give rise to another argument against diminishing our freedom and for our present powerful freedom. Why should we opt for diminished freedom when it is possible that we already have it within our power to be honest, truthful, peaceful, generous, loving toward our neighbor, and the like? Much of the evil in the world is due to our apathy or lack of caring. In many instances we know what is right and wrong, and how to avoid the wrong, but do nothing about it.

We have considerable power to alleviate the suffering of many unfortunates in the world. Many of the evils that beset us "poverty, want, homelessness, ignorance, starvation" are due to lack of care for others, a greed for power that runs roughshod over those who cannot defend themselves, an unwillingness to sacrifice some of our wealth, or an unwillingness to work. Those with the power "the intelligence, the talent, resources, and wealth" do not have a real intense desire to rid the world of evils. Many of the rest of us do not work to control the dark side of our person and thereby allow cruelty, greed, exploitation, corruption too much power in our lives.

Some of us have enough of the world's wealth to live comfortably, but are more concerned with bettering our own condition than with moderating the suffering of others. Others are out and out hedonists and are intent on attaining a more sumptuous lifestyle which leaves little willingness to sacrifice and work hard to overcome the ignorance and want of the less fortunate. Some do not want to work and to manage their affairs prudently "they are willing to live off others." Others are not that concerned about the amount of evil in the world as long as it does not affect their own lives, as long as it is not too close to home. Obviously, we do not have to be this way "we really have it in our power to rid humankind of much evil" truly it is our decision.

When a person has it within his power to correct a destructive way of life, does nothing about it, and then proceeds to blame others for his condition, we are hardly sympathetic towards him for the consequent suffering he must go through. We have it in our power to be peaceful, generous and helpful toward our neighbor; we have the power to eliminate much of the evil in the world if we choose to use it. Why should we blame God for our selfishness, our injustices toward and abuse

of others, for the outrageous movements such as genocide and famines brought about by war? We will say more about such possibilities in the next chapter, where we will consider the claim that God should modify human freedom so that war is impossible.

Notes

1. Antony Flew, "Divine Omnipotence and Human Freedom," *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*, ed. Antony Flew and Alasdair MacIntyre (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1958), pp.144-169.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 153.
3. *Ibid*.
4. Antony Flew, "Possibility, Creation, and "Temptation," *The Personalist*, vol. 52 (1971), p. 112. Cf. also, H. J. McCloskey, "On Being an Atheist," *Philosophy and Contemporary Issues*, ed. J. R.Burr and M. Goldfinger (New York: Macmillan, 1972), p. 132.
5. Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritate, Quaestiones disputatae,* vol. 1 cura et studio, R. Spiazzi (Taurini: Marietti, 1953), q. 22, art. 5.
6. *Ibid.*, art. 7.
7. *Ibid.*, ad 2.
8. *Ibid.*, ad 3.
9. *Ibid.*, ad 6.
10. H.J. McCloskey, "God and Evil."
11. John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, pp. 217-221, 289-297. *God and the Universe of Faiths* (Glasgow: Collins, 1977), Ch. 4.
12. David Griffin, *Evil Revisited*, p. 178.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 204.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 176.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 84.
16. John Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths*, Ch. 4. Cf. also, Hick's *Evil and the God of Love*, pp. 309-310.
17. Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1977), pp. 43-57.

Chapter XI
War and the Problem of Evil: A World without the Possibility of War

In the last chapter we saw how some claim that God should have created humans with less freedom so that we could not betray, torture, humiliate, rape and murder our fellow human beings. The possibility of waging war is one of these capacities that a good and omnipotent God should have withheld from man. Why did God give us the power to wage war, the capability of bringing so much destruction and sorrow to members of our own species? Why must so many of a nation's youths be cut down just as they are beginning their lives as mature human beings? Although great profits are made by some in war and technical progress is impressive, the price paid is grossly unjust to the sacrificed victims. War is truly obscene.

To the kind of young man who has not experienced the carnage of a battlefield war can be attractive. Its defender might point to the way in which war intensifies the pace and significance of life to an all consuming degree. Variety, distraction, the witnessing of astonishing and adventurous events, insecurity and threat to one's life--all these things do away with the dullness of life and heighten one's sense of being alive. Joseph Campbell in his *Power of Myth* tells us how some men confess that they love war because it gives them the experience of being alive. They don't get that experience by going to the office each day, but in war they suddenly are made aware of what it means to be alive.1 J. Glenn Gray speaks of the surge of vitality during an air raid and the glimpse of what we really are or might become, and how danger tests a man and has a limited purgative force that makes a man more human.2 The threat of danger and death in war makes a man insecure, but it gives him a greater awareness of his own life which he might lose at any moment. One might point to how war is necessary in order to develop the willingness to sacrifice without reflection or thought of personal loss. War corrects our peacetime view of ourselves as brave or cowardly and shows us who we really are. It is a preparation for the death which we all must face sooner or later. War releases social tensions that have been built up. It clarifies ideology, as it forces us to choose one of two sides to an issue. It gives many persons a reason for living, an opportunity to devote themselves to a cause. In war, research and creative activity are greatly intensified, unemployment is eliminated, the clever are given a chance to amass huge profits, the brave . . . to win fame. Some might look at it as a means to control population growth or a way whereby an older generation in power can maintain dominance over a nation's youth.

Many of these arguments in defense of war are unconvincing. They are neither sufficient nor necessary conditions for the morality of war. None of these, however, nor all of them together, is sufficient to justify the massive destruction, suffering, death, and sorrow that war brings to one's fellow human beings. The judgment that the above good consequences that follow upon war justify it is misguided. The goals might be worthy, but the means are improper and evil. That good can come out of evil does not make the evil good. True, there might be just wars. And yet, even in instances in which wars can be defended, we see regrettable human failure, a lamentable, disastrous lack of success in coming to grips with a pressing human problem. This often involves a failure to overcome ignorance, greed, expediency, and fanaticism, an unwillingness to compromise or to care for one's fellowman, a willingness to sacrifice others for one's own goals, and a serious failure to control what Jung would call the shadow dimension of our existence.

Many ways other than war exist for a man to distinguish himself. Heroes are possible in peace as well as in war. Facing up to the challenge of earthquakes, floods, tornadoes, physical accidents,

disease, and help for those who cannot help themselves--all of these offer many opportunities for someone to become a hero. Raul Wallenbourg risked his life to save innocent Jews from the Nazis. Werner Forssman performed the first heart catherization on himself.3 Dr. Daniel Zagury injected himself with an experimental AIDS vaccine.4 We know that there have been world leaders who put their lives in danger as they embraced a position of peace. There are mothers who scrub floors just to earn enough to make life better their children. If a man wants to profoundly feel the surge of life, he can cast his lot with the risktakers. He can race cars, battle on behalf of the dispossessed or disadvantaged, or, like Mother Teresa, pick up the dead and care for the dying. If he wants to experience the excitement of the gambler, he can funnel his assets into a chancy but potentially lucrative business and live on the edge of a disastrous defeat or a tremendous success with its concomitant exhilaration. In a world at peace, there are plenty of possibilities of experiencing the emptiness and devastated emotions of defeat and the heady joys of victory. And such experiences are of greater value, for they are experiences that are freely chosen--one does not have to answer a draft call to engage in them.

The fact that in many instances war cannot be justified has led some to suggest that God should have seen to it that war, with all its violence and bitterness, was impossible or less intensive and destructive. Why did not the good God give the human race a less powerful freedom that would prevent us from waging war? Why does he allow us to hurt each other so terribly? Something seems wrong here. Below I will consider five possible ways in which this might be done, i.e. five possible worlds that some might claim that God should have made. I will conclude that each is unsatisfactory as a world that the Creator should have brought about, and that we do not rightly demand that a good God have done so.

The first alternative world would be one in which God makes all violence impossible. This would be difficult. While a world with no violence is conceivable it would be so different from our own world that it would be hard to see it as really possible (not merely conceivable). One type of non-violent world would be a static world, a world with no activity. Such a world is hard to imagine. The analogy to a painting or sculpture limps, for at times we call a painting good because it captures the movement of a living reality, or the spark of an engaging personality. An abstract scientific theory springs out of and expresses the dynamism of the physical world. Even mathematical theory has an inner dynamism. Although in a static world there would be no earthquakes, hurricanes, diseases, nor disappointments, there would also be no life, no love, no enjoyment, no morality, no sense of achievement. Nobody would want this kind of world.

In our own world, life lives on life; we cannot get away from destruction and death. Danger is part of life. At times we have to oppose the powers of nature as when we have to defend ourselves against a massive rush of water which threatens to drown us, or a roused hostile animal. Here we use physical force as we do when we burn oil or coal, cut down a tree or food crop, or slaughter a cow for beef. God eliminating the possibility of all violence is no solution to the problem of war.

The second alternative world would allow physical force to be used to defend ourselves from the forces of nature, such as high winds, earthquakes, harmful viruses, threatening beasts and reptiles, but make violence toward another human being impossible. Our world would be one in which we would not have to defend ourselves against a physical attack by another human, for no human could harm us in that way. Unless the animal world were drastically different from what it presently is, we would see violence done by one animal to another. We would know that we are able to use a lethal weapon to destroy some things in the universe, e.g. to defend ourselves from the attack of a bear or rattlesnake, or to shatter clay pigeons and targets with a gun. It’s just that we could not bring ourselves to fire, or the weapon would not work if we tried to destroy another

human being. We could not forcefully damage his home, or take his property. This would immediately do away with the possibility of murder, rape, bodily assault, and the like. The weapons of war would be useless. Guns would not fire in a battle. Tanks might perform flawlessly on the proving grounds but break down and disintegrate on a real battlefield. An aircraft bomb-release mechanism would jam irreparably during an actual attack. Such a restructured world would be vastly different from our own. We would still know what violence is, but we would be confronted by the great mystery why we could not direct violence toward another human being, the law that it is impossible to succeed in doing something to physically harm another human being.

Such a state of affairs would be strange and puzzling. The man who hunts deer would no doubt see the possibility of aiming such violence at other animals. Of course, it is all too clear that humans are a kind of animal. Given the strong human tendency to actualize whatever we see as possible, the chances are that some humans would be strongly tempted to use that same violence against their neighbors.

The kind of world in which a human could use no violence against another would seriously impact our moral development. If God's intervention was aimed at protecting all persons from harm, then much human action would come to a standstill, or we could never count on anything happening as we started a project. If that divine intervention consisted in preventing any action which harmed a fellow human being, then we could not really set out to do anything. Our legitimate projects could be blocked because of the unwanted effects they would cause to someone, we know not whom. Our moral life would be limited to thoughts and intentions, but no accomplishment. Moral evil might consist of wanting to harm others but not being able to. We would praise God for what he has given us, accept our fate, and perhaps achieve goals by prayer rather than work. How this would happen--the far-reaching consequences of such a world--boggles the mind. It is difficult to understand how anyone would present such a strange world as clearly better than our own.

Our own world, in which persons are allowed to exercise a genuine free will, appears more realistic, but contains the possibility that someone might harm us physically or morally. It strongly inclines us to develop a genuine concern for our neighbors. A world in which men could not harm each other would be one in which they had no strong responsibility for each other.5 Even a world in which humans could help but not hurt each other would not do, for in certain instances these overlap. Swinburne notes the possibility of your health being harmed if I withhold from you certain vitamins, or if I persuade your wife to live with me.6

We know that it is possible that at times we have to defend ourselves from others who by irresponsibly exercising their freedom cause us unnecessary and undeserved suffering. We know, too, that the probability is high that what humans see as possible they will try to actualize, even though it causes harm. It appears difficult to preclude physical force and violence brought to bear on others.

Consider the following possibility: If an offender was brought into court and a judge rendered a decision against him, ordering him to pay us damages and he refused to do so, then what would be done next? If the court decreed that he should sell and vacate a building, and he refused, how would violence be avoided? What would we do if he responded as an enraged animal? Could we really escape without using force of any kind? I think not.

In the minds of many freedom is an important human goal, viz. the freeing of oneself from the constraints of the material world and from any unnecessary limits imposed by one's fellowman. It is questionable whether humans would view as a better world one in which their freedom was

so extensively curtailed--one in which they could not defend or express themselves--even though the aim was the elimination of evil.

In a world in which no human could physically harm another, a person could still harm and be harmed mentally. This could give rise to bitter complaints against the increasingly intense and eventually intolerable frustration that might arise when one cannot express physically one's displeasure. Such mental states have led some persons to choose death rather than a life of slavery or indignity.

A world in which physical force could be used against the powers of nature and other animals, but not against the human animal, is a highly unlikely candidate for a world which the Creator should have actualized in place of our own world. Such a world is not a clear-cut-satisfactory alternative which the Creator should have brought about.

A third alternative world could take care of this difficulty--the frustrated desire to harm others--by making all injustice on the part of someone who would hurt us impossible. This would involve a kind of determinism as found in Antony Flew's compatibilism. If we are right about our claim that Flew's compatibilism is really determinism, then, according to him, God would be responsible for evils such as the holocaust, genocide, rape and murder. Flew's objection to the good and all powerful Creator is that God could have arranged things such that man is truly free but always chooses what is morally right. Flew claims that God could have created a world in which humans were free but never sinned. They are still free, and hence, it is logically possible that a human be capable of sin and yet be protected by God from sin.7 The inference is that if this is possible, then the all powerful God should be able to do it, and if he does not do it then he is not good.

In response to this kind of objection we have noted Aquinas's claim that a free being, even though not determined by a necessity of force, can be determined by a necessity of inclination and still be free.8 In this way, God is free even though he is necessitated to seek out and cannot not will his proper end, namely his goodness. God's will, like any natural appetite, seeks out its end with necessity. The human will, likewise, is ordered to the highest good. While on earth, however, a person does not see clearly which particular goods lead to the highest good; in heaven one has that knowledge and sees clearly that God is the end to be loved above all else. This enables one to avoid sin while retaining freedom.

So Flew is right when he claims that a free human action is predictable, foreknowable, and explainable in terms of caused causes. However, such causes determining an action are metaphysically internal, rooted in a natural inclination. We cannot talk of humans being free and determined in this world, where our earthly status prevents us from seeing our goal clearly. The present earthly context leads us to mistake at times a particular good for the universal good. While freedom and determinism, by necessity of inclination, are compatible when one is in the presence of one's proper goal, in our present life, where necessity of force applies, one cannot be both free and determined.

Secondly, when we talk in terms of what is owed to us in virtue of our nature, we are in the realm of real possibility. However, when we are concerned with something which is not due to us by virtue of our nature, we are in the realm of the conceivable. Such is the status of a creature having free choice naturally confirmed toward the good. God could give it, but it would be a free gift. If he did not give it, we would have no reason to complain; how can something be a gift if it had to be given?

If Aquinas is on the mark concerning human freedom, then Flew's mistake is in demanding that the good and powerful God bestow upon humans a heavenly status.

To make all injustice on the part of those who would harm us impossible, God would have to create a world without the possibility of greed, ignorance, the excessive drive for power, stealing, cheating, lying, destroying another's reputation, infidelity, and the like. God would see to it that no evil desires occurred in a man's heart, that humans had no desire to harm their neighbors. But this presents a problem, for if we say that God should see to it that nobody cheats or steals or defrauds another, then again, we have a further limitation on human powers. We seem to be on a slippery slope to a very strange kind of world as we narrow the scope of human actions. Where will it end?

The above solution would extract a very high price of doing away with war. Human freedom would have to be severely downgraded or lessened. It is not that war is good, but that there is a strong suspicion that its possibility can only be done away with by God at the cost of a limitation on man's freedom that would destroy human beings as we know them. The price to be paid and the impracticality of lessening human freedom perhaps can be seen in what happens when we limit the freedom of others in an effort to do away with evils of some kind. Men rebel against restrictions on what they can say and do; they rebel against price controls, embargoes, against limits on when and where they can travel, against constraints on what they can make and to whom they can sell it. They rebel against censorship of what they read and see, how they dress, with whom they spend their time, and the like.

Another questionable effect of such a world would be the downgrading of the value we give to a person who develops solid virtue and holds his or her desires in check. If it was metaphysically impossible for a person to do evil to his fellowman, then why should we give any credit to a person who respects his neighbor and treats him properly? Such a world would lack a precious value: proper respect and love for one's neighbor, freely given, at times under trying circumstances. It can be claimed that a genuinely free human act which is good far surpasses in value an action that is good, but could not have been bad. A world without good actions freely done when they might just as well be evil actions would be a less human world. It would be a less caring and personal place, inclined toward coldness, loneliness and loss of dignity. If we remove the possibility of someone hurting us, then how can we appreciate his considerate care for us? Why should we look upon him as a good and warm person? How can we call him a friend?

A fourth alternative world would have God allowing some violence but interfering to stop it when it became too brutal. In it, God intervenes to stop the more horrible evil, such as the genocide and widespread slaughter of World Wars. Such a world would allow justified self-defense and even the just war. A person could physically defend himself from such evils as murder, robbery, and rape. Humans would know that they could physically harm their neighbor as well as the animals, but when things got too vicious, God would step in and stop the violence.

Although this world is more like the world as we find it and hence reasonably more realistic and attractive, it gives rise to difficult questions. What degree of allowed violence would be acceptable in this view? If the proposed better world allows some violence, we will come into contact with wayward and misguided persons who can do us harm, and we will use physical force to defend ourselves against them. To what degree could one defend oneself physically? To what extent could a country fight to preserve its integrity? What kind of war would God be expected to stop?

In a world in which God would allow some violence but would interfere to stop it when it became too brutal, how could we tell that God was acting in this way? What would be the criterion for discerning God's interference? How do we know that God at present is not intervening to moderate the violence that humans inflict upon each other? We can certainly imagine worse

scenarios than we experience today and be grateful for their not coming about. In the present world, we could imagine relationships deteriorating to global nuclear war with shocking extensive destruction of the human race. One could reasonably say that God has intervened to save us from such a catastrophe. Even in a frightful conflict at the present time, we cannot establish that God is not acting in the world to prevent even more horrible evils. It is hard to see how this difficulty can be overcome. Such a proposed world founders on the rocks of epistemological uncertainty.

A fifth alternative world would have God seeing to it that humans would be inclined away from violence and more strongly attracted toward peaceful solutions to human problems. This is a modification of the third proposed world in which humans have no moral failures.

One problem with such a proposal is suggested by Ernest Becker's claim that the amount of violence is influenced by man's irresponsibility. Becker, the cultural anthropologist and social theorist, agrees with Hocart, Rank, and Reich, that somewhere along the line man became excessively dependent upon external authority in his attempt to deal with evil, to fortify himself against evil and to strive for perfection that will qualify him for immunity even in worlds to come. The hero, in triumphing over disease, want and death, is the savior of mankind, someone who has delivered man from the evil which is the termination of life.

In the search for ideas and ideals enabling him to transcend death, man gave up to the state the pursuit of the hero status, his right to ritual, and the distribution of the earth's goods.9 This resulted in a great increase in the power of the state and man's trying to transcend death by merely obeying what the state told him to do. The state became the savior of humankind who delivers man from the evil of death. The state now is so powerful that man can become a hero only by following its orders.10The problem is that the state and those who lead it make disastrous mistakes whose effects are all the more horrible because of advanced technical means of destruction. Citizens are led to see phantasies of evil or evil in the wrong places. Even though man has it in his power to avoid war, his condition leads him to act as if he is powerless to get rid of evils, and it disposes him to send his sons to kill other men on orders of leaders no more competent than he. He lets others make the life and death decisions, even though so much depends upon his own assumption of responsibility. It is not surprising then, that the elimination of starvation and brutality is bogged down in a bureaucratic maze and mucked up by greed and selfishness.

Consequently, there is reason to think that humans, in a sense, already have the capacity to lessen the amount of violence; we have it within our power to put a stop to the wars which we bitterly resent. We can choose to sacrifice or moderate our acquisitiveness on behalf of our neighbor's welfare. Not that we must sacrifice our lives, but if we are so concerned with the massive suffering that war brings, we should be willing to accept less of the world's goods in order that others might not only have the wherewithal to stay alive but also to live decently. One might argue that it is not even in the self-interest of those who have many of the earth's blessings avidly to pursue and flaunt greater riches. Such a lifestyle tempts the less fortunate and morally weak to envy, bitterness, and violence. This is surely why some of the wealthy today keep a low profile--they hide their possessions and keep their comings and goings secret. Perhaps, when we foster the development of prosperity among the middle class in a developing country we must accept, in trade, bitterness and even violence on the part of the "have nots."

There is no evidence that anyone is compelled to demand the property of another under threat of force; there is nothing forcing a country to invade its neighbor. We do not have to embrace a lifestyle that commits us to amassing tremendous wealth by violently plundering a smaller, weaker neighbor. We do not have to be apathetic and niggardly toward the poor.

That the tendency to wage war is genetically programmed into human nature has not been established. It cannot be maintained that in the evolution of man there has been a selection in favor of aggressive behavior rather than other kinds, that war is caused by any one instinct or single motivation. Rather, a number of factors play a part in the development of a willingness to go to war: institutional authority and obedience, idealism, suggestibility, language, cost calculation, planning and information processing, indoctrination of both combatants and population.

Why should we complain that God should have made us with a stronger inclination toward peace when there is good reason to think that we have that potency already? Among us there are many unsung heroes who manifest that inclination, in addition to the virtues of compassion, forgiveness, magnanimity, hard work, fairness and the like. The problem is that there are too many others who act as if greed, vengeance, pride and infidelity are virtues, as if justice is determined by how powerful one is. It is not surprising, then, that at times some of us have to protect ourselves from the excessive demands of human failures. But it is human, not divine failure with which we have to deal. While some of us might be properly sensitive to the plight of their fellow human beings, many of us fall short when it comes to developing the virtues of justice, hard work, forgiveness, moderation, compassion, magnanimity, generosity, and the like. Our bodies are taken up with wonderful sense pleasures; our minds are on other things.

It seems clear, then, that the objection that God should have made humans more inclined toward peace is at least dubious. There is something wrong with the argument that blames God for things that man can handle if he truly cares, if he puts his mind to it. The problem is that we do not really care, or we do not care with genuine intensity.

The foregoing has presupposed that humans are morally allowed to defend themselves. This seems quite reasonable when we take into account the way humans have failed to respect the rights of others, from the harm to person and property they are wont to commit, from their greed and inconsiderateness. It is not that we should be quick to wage war or that war is not a *prima facie* evil, but the moral possibility of defending ourselves must be real. This is the only way to keep in check the wayward and misguided, whose capacity for bringing about harm is enormous. What has happened is that we have allowed this possibility of defending ourselves by means of violence to get out of hand. War shows us how far man can fall and how far he can rise, and that it is all due to his own willful decision.

The consequences of all this is that the foregoing five worlds which preclude the possibility or diminish the evil of war are at best highly questionable alternative possibilities that the Creator should have brought about. At worst they are failures. We should not call God less than good because he has not actualized them.

Notes

1. Joseph Campbell with Bill Moyers, *The Power of Myth*, ed. Betty Sue Flowers (N. Y. Doubleday, 1988), p. 114.

2. *The Warriors--Reflections of Men in Battle* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), pp. 12-15, 28-29, 48, 218.

3. Jay Katz, ed., *Experimentation with Human Beings*, pp. 136-172. Cf. Tom Beauchamp and James Childress, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, p. 495.

4. Philip J. Hiltz, "French Doctor Testing AIDS Vaccine on Self," *Washington Post*, March 10, 1987, p. A7. Cf. Beauchamp and Childress, *ibid*.

5. Richard Swinburne, "The Problem of Evil," *Contemporary Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Stephen Cahn and David Shatz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982) pp. 3-19; p. 8.

6. *Ibid*.

7. Antony Flew, "Possibility, Creation, and "Temptation," *The Personalist*, Vol. 52 (1971), 111-113. Cf. also, H. J. McCloskey, "On Being an Atheist." J. R. Burr and M. Goldinger, ed. *Philosophy and Contemporary Issues*, 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1976), pp. 131-137.

8. Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritate, Quaestiones disputatae*, q. 22, art. 5.

9. Ernest Becker, *Escape from Evil* (New York: The Free Press, 1975), pp. 61-62.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 153-154.

Chapter XII
The Role of Suffering: An Obstacle I?

Do the difficulties entailed in the human response to suffering confront us with an insurmountable obstacle to acknowledging the existence of a good and all powerful God? Is the challenge of suffering unreasonable and impossible for any one of us? Such questions suggest three more objections to the good and omnipotent God: 1) that some people are crushed and destroyed by the kinds and amount of evil, and so the Creator cannot be both good and omnipotent, 2) that we can develop a virtuous life in a world without the kind of suffering from disease and disasters that we find in this world, and 3) if evils are the occasion of courage, compassion, and the like which are so important to the spiritual life, then why do we try to protect ourselves from disasters, disease, poverty, and injustice? I will consider 1/ here and the others in the following chapter.

Is human suffering so great that it at times overwhelms and crushes us? John Hick acknowledges that instead of ennobling a person, evil can break a man's spirit and drive out whatever virtues he possessed.1 J. Glenn Gray, agrees. He claims that suffering does not make a person morally strong. The majority of people are not benefited by it, but rather are deteriorated in character and will. Those who are benefited by suffering are already strong, and have consciences that are already aware and do not have to be made more sensitive.2 Gray thinks that suffering has a limited power to purge and to purify.

We must admit that some people are not helped to greater virtue by evil, but are overwhelmed and destroyed by it. Great evils such as disease and natural calamities are not necessarily constructive to character training and the development of virtue, but are in some cases dangerous obstacles that put an end to moral progress. In some cases, more evil rather than good comes from such evil. How can we claim, then, that evils lead to the development of moral virtue? Why should we endure the suffering that is thrust upon us? How can we call the Creator of such a world good and all powerful?

Here "crushed" or "destroyed" by evil means morally crushed. The evil that a person must suffer leads him to give up and collapse in moral virtue. A man is told that he is dying. He proceeds to go out and get drunk and do things that his conscience in other circumstances would never allow. A woman whose husband was suddenly killed in a tragic accident becomes promiscuous and neglects her children. An aged person with multiple illnesses becomes bitter, pessimistic, and cranky, making life difficult for those around him. A person spurned in love takes his own life.

Some of those persons mentioned in a report on life in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp during World War II could be said to be crushed by evil. According to one account, prisoners were surprised and shocked by the spiritual and moral decline around them. Everyone stole, even the deputy manager of one of the biggest Dutch banks. The wife of an industrial manager stole jam from a baby's crib. A nurse would go through the beds and take sugar. The chief buyer of an international company stole bread rations from an acquaintance.3 In her diary, a young woman wrote of incredible cases of selfishness and ruthlessness. She claimed that she saw the desecration of corpses, prostitution, egoism, and all kinds of wrongdoing.4

In some cases it is not so easy to judge the existence or degree of a moral collapse. It is possible and even probable that some of the aforementioned persons were inclined toward immoral actions by the lack of proper nourishment or by physical infirmity. This appears to be what happened to Numa Turcatti, one of the survivors of the Andes plane crash. Turcatti, a beloved, respected,

inspiring leader of the Old Christians Rugby Team, became weak after two tries to find a way out of the mountains for the thirty-two survivors of the crash. It was increasingly difficult for him to force down the raw flesh of his dead comrades that was keeping all alive. Bitterly disappointed, he grew weaker as his infections became worse. He would melt snow only for himself and would ask others to do things such as pass a blanket, something he was quite capable of doing for himself. Later, he refused to feed himself, lapsed into a coma, and died.5

In cases like Turcatti's, one's physical condition can profoundly affect the way one deals with moral questions. It is true that a person, though injured, can continue to make sound judgments, to accept his/her fate or bitterly reject it, to care for others or to become locked up in himself, in short, to grow or decline in virtue. And yet, it is not unusual that physical forces injure a human being to the extent that his judgment is clouded or impaired. High fever makes a person delirious. A concussion can leave one confused. In such cases, moral responsibility can be severely lessened or destroyed.

Turcatti was subjected to two conditions that weakened him physically: his leg became infected, and he was revolted by having to eat human flesh. For neither of these can we fault him. The result was further disappointment and what appears to be a moral collapse. The same might be said of aged persons who become bitter and troublesome because of their deteriorating physical condition. But in both instances it might be more accurate to talk in terms of "moral death" rather than moral collapse, for under such circumstances we find it hard to attribute full responsibility for one's actions. The gravity of offenses committed while suffering great pain are rightfully acknowledged to be mitigated.

Indeed, there is a certain tragic dimension to suffering. All of us must suffer the consequences of the mistakes of the past. Young men are sent to die in wars that should never be fought. Innocent children and civilians are indiscriminately killed in genocides. Much of the suffering that we must undergo is not due to our own failings but rather to the fact that we are born into a world with a history of mistakes and injustices; we are caught in patterns not of our own choosing. We suffer because of the way others respond to the color of our skin, our type of intelligence, the influence of fads and economics.6 Over the years these mistakes accumulate and become deeply imbedded in society. They affect us all.

However, even though some persons appear to collapse morally when confronted with intensive suffering, we know that not all do. There are others who are not destroyed morally but accept suffering which in their case functions as a sufficient, if perhaps not a necessary condition for moral progress. A person need not be destroyed by evil.

Viktor Frankl tells us that some persons, far from being crushed by evil, find themselves in situations in which they can achieve fulfillment only in genuine suffering. Frankl is the Viennese psychiatrist, founder of logotherapy, a method of treating mental illness by means of deeper insights into one's purpose for living.7 He tells of the brilliant young man who was paralyzed by tuberculosis of the spine. By chance this man found out that his case was hopeless. Rather than becoming bitter at his fate, he became grateful for having the knowledge of exactly when he was to die. He looked upon his situation as the last chance to test his fighting spirit, and he refused drugs to ease his pain. He was convinced that the fight he would put up against pain was all important. His last days were spent doing what he enjoyed most: listening to music and doing mathematics. A profound emotion of love for humankind and a sense of cosmic vastness filled his soul.8

Frankl was deeply impressed by another of his patients, a hitherto pampered young woman who suddenly found herself in a concentration camp, where she became terminally ill. Instead of

cursing her state, she was very grateful for what had happened to her. The harsh realities of her present existence led her to view her previous life as too easy, too devoid of challenges that would put her into contact with the genuine realities of human existence. She faced death courageously, convinced of the reality of eternal life.9

These two persons thought they lived a better life after being inflicted with suffering than before. Neither of them collapsed morally.

The Bergen-Belsen account also contains evidence of the existence of many heroes who were not morally destroyed by the inhuman conditions forced upon them in the death camps. The author speaks of how the material he had to work with abounded with examples of kindliness, sympathy, compassion, heroism, nobility, love, faith, hope, self-sacrifice, the brotherhood of all men, and the like.10 In such a horrible place as a death camp there were those whose lives proclaimed that all the suffering in the world need not destroy the human spirit but could raise it to sublime heights. One cannot read the death camp literature without being impressed by the courage and holiness of many of those destined to die.

That some persons morally collapse does not establish that such suffering is clearly gratuitous, useless, and without any purpose. It is possible that such terrible suffering can be the occasion of developing and manifesting tremendous virtue. There were many in the camps that responded with courage and compassion to the questions life asked of them each day. That evils to be endured can be the occasion of the development or manifestation of solid virtue can be seen in what happened to another one of the Andes survivors.

Before the accident Arturo Nogueira, the young socialist, was a closed and silent person, a difficult man who was convinced that radical solutions were needed for the problems of poverty and oppression. After the crash, he took an interest in determining the exact location of the camp, but as time went on, he lost faith and remembered that as a child he had a premonition that he would die at the age of twenty-one. He was moody and unfriendly, and isolated himself from the group, refusing to go outside the cold dark fuselage that served as shelter. Meat had to be brought to him by others who placed it in his mouth.11 There is strong evidence, however, that during the last days of his life he rose to new heights of virtue. Two days before his death, he accepted his turn to lead the prayers for all concerned, for their families, for his living and dead companions. He thought he was very close to God. In a note that he wrote to his parents, he said that he was suffering physically and morally like he never suffered before, but that he never believed in God so much. He expressed sorrow for the pain he caused his parents, and ended with a remark that life is hard but it is worth living even though one must suffer. We must have strength and courage.12

We can see in Nogueira that increased suffering need not lead to a moral collapse but can be accompanied by a greater appreciation of the value of life. Arturo was not bitter toward the Creator of a world in which he would suffer so much, in which he would live such a short life. He finds the divine power to be a mystery and asks forgiveness from those he has offended. His last words are an affirmation of the value of a courageous life. Believers would say that instead of being crushed by suffering he was challenged to transcend it and live at a more profound level of life.

Others have remarked how the evils that we cannot avoid, even horrible evils, lead us to a deeper level of existence.

J. Glenn Gray in *The Warriors* tells us how men look back on the experiences of combat and consider it a moment in their lives that they would not want to have missed.13 The threat of danger and death in war makes a man insecure, but it gives him a greater awareness of the life which he might lose at any moment. Gray speaks of the surge of vitality during an air raid and the glimpse

of what we really are or might become. Danger tests man and has a limited purgative force to make a man more human.14

For Joseph Campbell, evil functions as a stimulant to an appreciation of what it means to be alive. In his *Power of Myth* he tells us that "Men sometimes confess that they love war because it puts them in touch with the experience of being alive. In going to the office every day, you don't get that experience, but suddenly, in war, you are ripped back into being alive. Life is pain; life is suffering; and life is horror--but, by God, you are alive."15

The above words are typical of Campbell's insistence that pain is part of there being a world at all,16 and that it is a childish attitude to reject it--to say that this world should not have been. We must say "yes" to life and see it as magnificent in this way.17 The horror of the world is the prelude to a wonder: a tremendous and fascinating mystery.

For Campbell, death and life are two aspects of the same thing, "being, becoming," which we have to balance.18 Life would not be life if loss and sorrow were not involved. "The ends of things are always painful." Campbell emphasizes the necessity of our embracing the world with all its pain and evil. He reminds us of the Buddhist *bodhisattva* who, though he has achieved the realization of immortality, voluntarily subjects himself to the sorrows of the world. He cites Paul's *Epistle to the Philippians* where we read how Christ takes the form of a servant on earth, even to death on the Cross.

C. S. Lewis and Simone Weil are convinced that we should see suffering and pain as instruments of God and treat them as such. For Lewis, pain and suffering call man to a higher kind of life that is his true destiny, a life in which he is close to God. This is what gives meaning to suffering. According to Lewis, pain and suffering shatters the illusion that all is well with us and remind us that what we have is not our own or not enough for us. It takes away from us things that would leave no room in our soul for God. In a sense, pain empties us and prepares us for our only true good, namely the Divine. If pain and suffering did not exist, humans would be thoroughly engrossed in their own self-sufficiency. Nothing would effectively call them to their proper destiny.19

The mystic, Simone Weil, also sees pain and suffering as bringing us into a special intense relationship with God. Weil tells how she suffered for twelve years from a neurological disorder which caused her intense pain even during sleep and "has never stopped even for a second." For years it was so great that it exhausted her to the extent that she despaired of intellectual work, almost as a condemned man despairs the day before his execution.20 She did not morally collapse during that time, but came to the conclusion that suffering and affliction were the key to a full life.

For Simone Weil the purpose of suffering is to get us into contact with that necessity which makes up the order of the world. The universe is the vibration of the word of God.21 In order to hear that word, we need not only joy by which it reaches our soul, but also physical suffering by which it penetrates our body. The experience of pain is the means that God uses to get into contact with us. Simone thinks that when either joy or physical pain come to us, we must open our souls just as a woman opens the door to someone with a message from her lover. It doesn't matter whether the messenger is polite or rude. It is the message that counts.22 Again, nature in all its beauty and horror is a means whereby God becomes available to us. We should revere the material world as a loving husband would revere the favorite needle of his dear wife who has passed away. As the needle is an instrument which operated at the will of his beloved, so too, nature is an instrument of the will of God.23

An appreciation of what it means to be alive, a suggestion of our real destiny, some kind of contact with the Creator are ideas compatible with Viktor Frankl's logotherapy. Frankl claims that

the main human concern is not to gain pleasure or avoid pain. What we are looking for in life is not pleasure or power, but insight. The primary motivational force in humans is that which leads us to find meaning in our life.24

One important way to find this meaning, according to Frankl, is to accept the challenge of unavoidable suffering. If one takes on bravely the challenge to suffer, then life has meaning up to the last moment, and one actualizes the highest value. The important thing to remember is that each day we are questioned by life, and our duty is to answer responsibly.25 No matter how great the suffering that confronts us, we still are free to find a meaning for it or to refuse to see it as a challenge and a chance to grow in virtue. The meaning is there to be found, but we have to be disposed for the search. With suffering we are given an opportunity to grow spiritually beyond ourselves.26

Our meaning is not to be found by focusing upon ourselves. Rather, it is attained by transcending the self and giving oneself to another--a person, a cause, an idea. Frankl is pointing to the subjective disposition of man as crucial in the experience of evil and that suffering and evil is a sufficient condition neither for growth in virtue nor for a moral collapse. Suffering, rather, is an opportunity which is accepted by some and rejected by others, an obstacle to increased dignity that can be overcome by some and that effectively stops others. And how it functions is really up to us.

The way to handle suffering, according to Frankl, is to see it as having a purpose. It ceases to be suffering once we see that it can lead to a goal. If a person has a reason, then that person can endure any kind of suffering, while a person with little purpose in life would find even a life of pleasure boring and undesirable.27

Suffering, as we have seen, can function as a test. It can show a seriously seeking person where one stands in his quest for perfection. Whether one passes the test or fails, if one is truly concerned, one can attain a deep insight into who one is. If one comes through the difficulty with virtue intact or enhanced, then one has gained a greater stature. If one fails, then one knows what direction one must go in should one seek improvement.

Combat is one of those evils that test us, according to Gray. In his observations of men in battle, he tells us how in battle a man learns more about himself in a way never before experienced. The experience shows him who he truly is.28

In general, there's nothing wrong with testing--we test ourselves and others often and with good reason. Some of our tests are ordered toward safeguarding or attaining desirable goals, as when we demand that doctors, airline pilots and the like show that they are qualified to take the heavy responsibilities of safely serving human life. Other tests are not geared to protecting society but are ordered to the achievement of a kind of dignity, as when a mariner sails the Atlantic in a small boat, an author writes a brilliant piece of literature, or an athlete wins an Olympic gold medal. In our social life, a man or woman who is loved by someone attains a dignity and worth that can never be taken from him or her. Even when such love is lost, it will be eternally true that for a time he/she was loved by another. We admire the independently wealthy man who risks a considerable portion of his wealth and builds a successful operation from the ground up. He is like the mountain climber who sets out to scale a peak yet unconquered.

The dignity that the successful person achieves is permanent and has value in itself. We do not develop virtues like courage and sympathy merely in order to build our character so that we can meet some greater challenge or difficult state in the future. A project can have value in itself as a an occasion to develop virtue, as an opportunity to distinguish oneself, as part of one's purpose in life. We can manifest a one-time, unusually courageous response in a crisis situation, hoping, in

fact being quite sure, that such a test will never occur in the future. The Polish priest, Maximilian Kolbe, interned in a Nazi concentration camp, stepped forward and took the place of another prisoner who was selected for death. The latter had a family, and the priest gave up his own life for him. That Kolbe, according to some, was an anti-Semite and that the man he stepped forward for was a Christian like himself does not destroy the heroic nature of the act by which he attained an immortal dignity.

As we go through life, each of us is compiling a record which earns us a high or low degree of dignity. What a person has done is the basis for our judgment as to who that person is, how great a person one is. Take the eighty-year old war hero, now riddled with arthritis and weakened by a bad heart. Nobody expects him to go out and lead the charge as he did some sixty years ago. And yet, he remains a hero, even though his subsequent life was undistinguished. Nobody can take away that part of his record, nor should they try. In judging the dignity of a person we consider what that person has been through, how that person has conducted life under challenging conditions. The state of affairs that no longer require one's virtues does not automatically downgrade one's dignity. Once peace comes, the war hero's courage is not thereby expunged from the record of human existence. After the war, persons with different skills but less courage might be more valuable to society, but the record must show that the hero responded admirably when the circumstances demanded it. It is not unusual that some persons are challenged and pass the test of virtue, and then when circumstances change, are given a respite as others are called upon to serve.

The fact that some people are devastated by evil is not a serious objection to the goodness and omnipotence of God. A moral collapse under extreme physical conditions can be blameless. And yet a person need not be crushed by suffering, for such evil can be the occasion for a great advance in virtue. It can be seen as a test showing us the degree of our development in virtue. It can enable a person to gain a more profound insight into who he is. For the person who is serious about his own search for perfection it can be a stimulation to greater virtue.

No doubt, in times of crisis, a portion of the human race shows itself weak and even falls into disgrace. And yet, we know that another significant part rises to tremendous heights of heroism and holiness. And we know that we are free to respond with honor and dignity in the most difficult circumstances, that one does not have to be destroyed by the evil one is called upon to endure.

In the next chapter we will consider two remaining difficulties: the possibility of growth in virtue in a world without evil, and why, if evils are the occasion of the development of virtue, we try to insulate ourselves from them, why we try to avoid natural disasters and rid the world of injustice.

Notes

1. *Evil and the God of Love*, pp. 366-367.

2. J. Glenn Gray, *The Warriors*, p. 218.

3. A. J. Herzberg, "Tweestroomenland." J. Presser, *The Destruction of the Dutch Jews*, trans. A. Pomerans (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1969), pp. 517-520.

4. A. J. Herzberg, *ibid*.

5. Piers Paul Read, *Alive, the Story of the Andes Survivors* (New York: Avon, 1975).

6. Cf. Douglas Hall, *God and Human Suffering--An Exercise in the Theology of the Cross* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing, 1986), pp. 82-88.

7. Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning, an Introduction to Logotherapy* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1965).

8. Viktor Frankl, *The Doctor and the Soul*, 2nd ed. (New York: Bantam, 1965), pp. 91-92.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 92.
10. A.J. Herzberg, *ibid*.
11. Read, *Alive*, p. 140.
12. *Ibid*.
13. Gray, *The Warriors*, pp. 12, 29, 48.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 15, 28
15. Joseph Campbell with Bill Moyers, *The Power of Myth*, p. 114.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 65
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
19. C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: Macmillan, 1976), pp. 95-97.
20. Letter to Joe Bousquet," in *The Simone Weil Reader*, ed. George Panichas (New York: David McKay, 1977), pp. 90-91.
21. Simone Weil, *Waiting for God*, trans. Emma Craufurd (New York: Harper, 1973), p. 132.
22. *Ibid*.
23. *Ibid.*, pp.128.
24 Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, pp. 176-181.
25. *Ibid.*, pp.178-179.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
27. Frankl, *Man's Search . . .*, pp. 178-179.
28. J. Glenn Gray, *The Warriors*, p. 169.

Chapter XIII
The Role of Suffering, an Obstacle Ii?

The second objection suggested by necessary human suffering is that we can develop a virtuous life in a world without the kind of suffering from disease and disasters to which we are exposed in this world. Hence, such suffering is useless and should not be permitted by a good and omnipotent God. This objection is opposed to John Hick's idea that the purpose of God's creation is one of soul-making, that our task is to develop virtue in a very un-paradisal world which challenges us with extreme, potentially crushing, and apparently meaningless evils.1

Hick claims that the powerful but apparently meaningless suffering that we find in the present world functions as a necessary means to the development of virtue in our soul.2 If we knew the reason for any and every suffering that we had to undergo "that it was a punishment for our mistakes or a necessary means to our moral development" then our actions would be of a lesser value. We would be inclined not do something simply because it is right, but because of the reward or punishment. Hick has something here, for, although against Kant, a meritorious act can be one that is pleasant and agreeable to the agent, we must admit that an act done because it is right, even though it demands a sacrifice of the agent's own immediate interests, is an act of greater value.

In a criticism of Hick, G. Stanley Kane claims that virtue or soul-making can occur in other ways that do not involve such suffering.3 Courage could be developed without physical evil in a freely chosen, difficult and demanding, long-range project such as writing a doctoral dissertation or training for the Olympic games. Such projects would demand steadfastness, perseverance, persistence in the face of difficult obstacles and strength of character. The virtue would be of the same sort as would be required to face up to illness, natural disaster, and similar adversity. The spouse of a doctoral candidate could develop just as much patience, fortitude and strength of character as someone who had to care for a child through a long and serious illness. People on an athletic team could develop cooperation just as much as those who band together to help their neighbors when a tornado or flood strikes. Even if one held that the courage developed in the face of evil was of a higher moral value than that developed in a world without evil, the two types of virtue would have much in common and be similar in character. Kane thinks that the theist would have difficulty, for he would have to hold that this minor difference in value outweighs the disvalue of all the pain that comes from natural evils.4

As we have seen in Chapter Nine on knowledge, this objection is suspect. The key is the various degrees of courage which suggest more of a major difference in value than Kane's minor difference. The courage manifested on the athletic field is for a short time; the person who has a terminal illness is in a game that never ends, or ends only with his death. An athlete willingly competes; the sick person does not have the option of playing another season or retiring, but must come to grips with unavoidable pain that does not cease. After a game an athlete can relax with friends and forget a humiliating loss or performance; a man with a progressive debilitating illness takes it with him wherever he goes. The Olympic athlete is rewarded with money; the sick person is well on the way to becoming poor. It is hard to see a minor difference in courage between that called for in an athlete who has failed to make the Olympic team or has come in last in the high jump, and the virtue demanded from a man who has just lost his wife and children in a tragic fire. There is no comparison between the failed doctoral candidate and the person who must live with terminal cancer. Or, . . . little comparison between the wife of a crisis ridden scholar and the single mother who must care for a brain injured or *spina bifida* child for fifteen years or more. There's

no comparison between the courage asked of the girl whose four children suffocated in a sweltering car parked in a hospital lot while she gave blood, and that of the sprinter who was just forbidden by his government to take part in the Olympic games. The evidence points to a deeper division between these two degrees of courage than Kane would seem to admit. It is very difficult to downgrade the virtue asked of us by truly unfortunate events.

Nor can we say with much confidence that without the need to struggle against disease and natural disasters, we would pursue more humanly rewarding projects.5 It is unlikely that many of us would be like the risktakers who willingly seek out challenges and freely choose to confront evil and death. The more likely scenario would include a marked decrease in the amount of courage and other virtues. Many of us are weak, lazy, irresponsible, and tend to slacken off in our efforts to reach a higher goal when we are not pushed. In a world without the present kinds of evil, it seems more probable that it would take much greater effort to develop the virtues in question. Only a limited number of people are willing to risk their lives to attain distinction, to perform actions beyond the call of duty, to put in long periods of training to achieve a skill. Many are inclined to sit on the sidelines and let others develop virtue. There is good reason to think that in the end it would be harder, not easier, to develop virtue in a world in which we could never be seriously hurt. It is not at all clear that in a world devoid of unavoidable suffering, humans would develop a life with as much virtue as we find in the present world.

If life were a game in which we could never get hurt unless we chose to expose ourselves to evil, it would very well be empty and aimless for more people than it is now. At times we have to be forced against our will to confront reality. The sober realities of death, illness, the need to work and to cooperate with our fellow humans remind us that we are involved in more than a mere game. We realize the possibility that danger can act as a purgative force that makes a person more human. We have seen that the possibility of suffering a real loss of some consequence forces us to live at a deeper level of existence. It is obvious that our present world asks a great deal of us. It is not clear that such a world is not better than one in which too little is asked.

One might express the objection in this way: God should have made a world in which severe suffering was not forced upon us but freely accepted by us if we so desired. For the courage shown in difficult circumstances that were freely chosen would be of greater value than that manifested in the face of what we humans cannot control. Would it not be better if God saw to it that no unwanted evils afflict us? Would it not be better and in accord with the value of freely chosen evils that our world have no disease, no floods, no earthquakes, no famines, no injustice, and the like?

Although at first glance this objection appears to have some strength, further inquiry shows it not to be so powerful. Although it is true that occasions to practice virtue freely chosen make our actions more valuable, it is also highly doubtful that humans would choose to be challenged by such suffering if it were not forced upon them. How many human beings would freely choose to go through the sufferings wrought by natural disasters and disease? Not many, to be sure. On the contrary, our choice would be in the opposite direction. And we feel strongly that we are doing the right thing when we go to great lengths to avoid such evils. If we had our say, most of us would opt for a world without such disasters.

Most of us would want a world without the need to respond to such powerful challenges to be courageous, faithful, and the like. Natural evils and evils that are inflicted on us by others challenge us to develop virtues that we would otherwise neglect. The suffering occasioned by natural disasters gives us an opportunity that we would never choose for ourselves. It forces us to choose or reject virtue, to advance toward perfection or to retreat.

C.S. Lewis gives us another possible reason why it is better that we be exposed to unwanted suffering.6 He claims that without pain man would be wrapped up in himself, and nothing could break through and call him to his proper destiny. The happiness and worldly prosperity that we enjoy might be an obstacle to our true end in life which, for Lewis, is the knowledge of God. We might enjoy a trouble-free life so much that it might take all our attention and leave no time in our lives for God, our true end. We have a tendency to turn to God only as a last resort when all other things in life fail to please us, or when our worldly goods and pleasures are taken away. According to Lewis, we are wrong; we should not use God merely as a parachute.

The suffering that we are forced to undergo because we are part of this natural world, then, shakes us up, reminds us of a greater calling, and prepares us for our only true good. At death, that momentous event that we all must face, we will leave all earthly possessions, friends, and status. The only realities left will be ourselves and our relation to God.7 Pain and suffering can be seen as a challenge to correct our orientation in life, a challenge that could hardly occur in a world of no natural evils. It gives us the opportunity to purify our intentions and to focus our attention on our true goal.

Another reason in defense of a world in which humans must face unavoidable suffering is the questionable possibility of a world without natural disasters and evils. A world without earthquakes, floods, tornadoes and the like, might be conceivable in a kind of science fiction context, but it is impossible, given what we know of the universe. Those who advocate such a world must give us their proposal in comprehensive detail, showing the consequences of eliminating the unwanted evils. This amounts to a re-writing of the laws of nature as we know them, including a re-working of our understanding of what it means to be human, a task in which nobody so far has made significant progress. The mere claim that the omnipotent God should be able to bring about such a world is a piece of unwarranted mysticism.

In the present world suffering is a natural consequence of man's place in nature, for nature operates on the principle of the building up and breaking down of organic and inorganic elements. We humans, as bodily creatures, are part of nature, we are related to the realm of the physical world, even though by means of our intellectual dimension we go beyond it. There is no reason why we should be immune to the characteristics of such a world. Hence, humans are exposed to suffering and pleasure just as every other sensitive bodily creature. In order to have a world without humans suffering from natural evils, we would have to show in detail how human beings would have bodies that share their anatomy with other animals and their physicality with rocks and trees, but still do not respond like other bodies in the universe. The articulation of such a world is a formidable task which thinkers hesitate to embrace.

In such a context one would have to overcome the present status of humans, and change our place in the world of nature. That is, we humans are not the highest being of creation in every respect, and hence we must defer to or suffer when we come into contact with some of the others. A dog can run faster than we, a rock is more lasting, a lion is stronger, certain types of atoms are more powerful. We are not absolutely the highest being in the universe.

A theist view sees all such entities as manifesting somewhat the greatness of God in a more perfect way than does man. They might do so in a more limited way than we who have many perfections and potentialities that stem from our vastly more powerful intellect. And yet, because, for example, a rock manifests stability, and a lion manifests great power, such entities have a kind of right to maintain their existence even when confronted by humans.

Nonhuman beings, then, are justified in existing and acting according to their natures. Characteristics such as the permanence of a rock or the dynamic power of electricity both of which

surpass similar respective powers of a human, allow us by way of affirmation, negation, and analogy to arrive at a hitherto unappreciated aspect of the Divinity.8 So, these various creatures that hurt us when we encounter them in the wrong way or at the wrong time have a distinctive role to play in the universe. When we meet them, their superior power or stability must prevail. To the theist who sees God as the rich source of existence and sees that to know him is part of our destiny, the intense complexity of this exciting and dangerous world gives us a point from which we can launch our most important life's project.

Process philosophers in general agree with how creatures other than humans have a special status in God's sight. The aim of the creative power of the universe is to promote the intrinsic goodness of experience itself. Some combination of harmony and intensity of experience which is the aesthetic criterion of the good is within the capacity of even nonhuman animals.9God is concerned about all creatures, many of whom are endowed with a type of freedom that allows them to act according to their nature, even if they cause humans to suffer.

Of course, how we respond to such evils is of the utmost importance. In the last chapter, we have emphasized the possibility that a person need not be destroyed or crushed by evil. Here we will say more about our response to the challenges of the world.

The conquering of evils that are thrust upon us against our will is a tremendous achievement when it occurs. Natural disasters, for example, confront us with the greatest of all challenges. Transcending them or not letting them kill the spirit is an action of great value. Meeting the challenge to sacrifice for and show effective compassion toward our neighbor "to make the world a more loving place" is an important step toward our own soul-making. The person who overcomes tremendous odds to conquer a disease or to pull himself out of poverty deserves our admiration.

Peter Koestenbaum, an existential psychiatrist, puts it this way: the meaning of life is found in the conquest of suffering.10 In times of crisis, man is challenged to go beyond himself, to move to a higher level of existence, a level at which he sees himself as never before. This deeper insight into human existence is all important. The existential way of seeing things is based on the idea that in our deepest pain we can also find our deepest meaning. Death puts us into contact with the real. Koestenbaum says that if he were a good and omnipotent God, he would create a world in which the existence and overcoming of evil would be the fundamental program of nature.11

As we have seen in the previous chapter, Viktor Frankl's view is that the attitude we take toward suffering, the attitude in which we take our suffering upon ourselves, this is what truly matters in a person's life. What we are looking for in life is not pleasure or power, but insight. Frankl claims that our main concern is not to gain pleasure or avoid pain; our primary motivational force is that which leads us to find meaning in our life. One important way to achieve this is to accept the challenge of unavoidable suffering. If one takes on the challenge to endure evil bravely, then life has meaning up to the last moment, and one actualizes the highest value. Suffering ceases to be suffering once man sees that it has a purpose.12 If a person has a reason, then one can endure any kind of evil, while a person with little purpose in life would find even a life of pleasure boring and undesirable. We should accept courageously the suffering that is inevitable.13 A person should shape one's destiny wherever possible, and endure it where necessary. In this way one balances the pursuit of freedom with the exercise of courage.

This way of looking at things demands that when each day we are questioned by life, our duty is to answer responsibly. No matter how great the suffering that confronts us, we still are free to find a meaning for it or to refuse to see it as a challenge and a chance to grow in virtue. The meaning is there to be found, but we have to be disposed to find it.

Suffering is ambiguous; it does not necessarily bring about virtue or a moral collapse. It is rather an opportunity which is accepted by some and rejected by others, an obstacle to increased dignity that can be overcome by some and that effectively stops others. How it functions is really up to us. Our subjective disposition, the way we experience evil, is critical. We can stand tall or break down in the presence of evils thrust upon us.

If we insist on talking about better worlds which God should have made, then a reasonable candidate is a world in which persons have the opportunity to freely choose to rise to the challenge of these greatest of evils, to maintain their spirit, and to bring good out of such evils. This would be a better world than one in which humans are never so challenged.

C.S. Lewis focusses upon the signal character of unavoidable suffering. Suffering can be seen as a sign to us where our true values should lie: somewhere outside the material possessions of this life or somewhere beyond our present life. At death, we will leave all earthly possessions, friends, and status; the only realities left will be ourselves and our relation to God.14Suffering that is forced upon us is a "little death," in that in both suffering and death we are forced to be separated from something that we truly desire. When we suffer, we experience a loss. At death we will experience the ultimate earthly loss. Suffering is the preparation for the moment of death that all of us must face. Every person must die, but how one looks at death and how one dies is in a very real sense a personal question. Like Frankl, Lewis focusses on the need to be willing to face up to the unpleasant realities challenging us from time to time.

The third objection to the claim that suffering is necessary is that if evils are the occasion of courage, compassion, and the like, which are so important to the spiritual life, then why do we try to protect ourselves from disasters, disease, poverty, and injustice? If suffering is helpful and important, if it leads to the development of virtue and a closeness to God, then we would expect it to be sought after by devout believers who would look for opportunities to experience it. However, that we do not find.

Clearly, most people, even the spiritually minded, ordinarily do not seek out suffering as something that can help them. This is not to reject the value of asceticism and our need to deny and discipline ourselves. We recognize the value achieved by someone who puts herself into danger, aiming to distinguish herself or to come into contact with her deepest being. Most people, however, try to distance themselves from the conditions that call for the exercise of unusual courage, patience, compassion, and the like. We think it proper to try to protect ourselves from disasters, to do away with disease, poverty, and injustice. We do not think that we should sit back and merely respond passively to the world as we find it. We try to reduce the amount of suffering and to make the conditions of life less harsh for ourselves and our neighbors. Either such conditions are evil, and we are right in fighting against them, or they are good “opportunities for exercising virtue” and we err when we try to ameliorate them, for we thereby diminish the number of opportunities for practicing virtue, and thereby lessen the total good of the universe.

We know that some persons in power focus upon the need for the less fortunate to moderate their requests for change and less harsh conditions, to see their situation as an opportunity to practice virtue. Some do not want to share their good fortune with the less advantaged and move decisively to stifle revolutionary tendencies. Their argument is that the "have nots" should see their deprived status as an opportunity to practice self-denial, industry, courage, faith, love of God and country, compassion for their fellow sufferers, and the like. The poor should be resigned to their condition, for that is their destiny and in that they will achieve their fulfillment. The suggestion is clear: the "have nots" would be better off if they submitted to the way things are and did not struggle for changes that would involve the sacrifices of others. The matter is sensitive, for at times

patience, harder work, and resignation constitute the better course of action, even for those rightfully committed to change.

It is a mistake to think that, in general, we should not try to lessen the evils in our life. The principle that we should not try to eliminate the evils of the world could be the cornerstone of a heartless society in which persons would be justified in caring little about their neighbor's pain or poverty. It would strike at the core of human society, the need for cooperation with and help for each other. It would also downgrade the idea that part of a person's destiny is to free oneself from the influences of the physical world and attain a deeper degree of freedom. We should not advocate or accept a world in which humans should not try to better their condition. It is not that we should avoid suffering at all costs. Even critics such as Madden and Hare agree that some of it is necessary in certain circumstances. Rather, in general, we strive to get rid of conditions that bring about suffering because we think that we should have the option of exposing ourselves to such dangers or of remaining protected from them. This gives us a more meaningful freedom that is consonant with the spark of the infinite in us that leads us toward an expansion of our being.

The value of a truly free response or a truly free life needs no defense today. The theist tries to eliminate war, disease, starvation, and the like because he is morally bound to exercise love toward his neighbor. True human love strives to leave it up to the person loved as to how much suffering or how many opportunities for the development of virtue he must seek. It's not that nobody should increase the amount of suffering for himself. As a person pursues virtue, it might be in order for her to seek out situations in which she might suffer. It is possible that some persons should follow Simone Weil's view extolling the power of suffering to bring us closer to the Divinity.

However, whereas a person might be obligated to herself to search out opportunities for the exercise of courage, industry, hope, and faith, that is her decision to make. The reason: We must respect personal autonomy. Our obligation to have concern for her, to love and help her leads us to relieve her of the burdens she does not see fit to bear. We are obligated to protect and enhance our neighbor's freedom so that we do not inflict evils upon her, as if we were the ones to decide what was good for her. We leave it up to the individual person as to how much suffering or how many opportunities for the development of virtue she must seek.

What if we succeed in ridding the world of the evils that impact on us and the cruelty, injustice and the like that we inflict on others? Objectors might say that then we will have eliminated the evils that functioned as stimulants to greater virtue, the result being a world of less value than the present world. In reply, one might argue that the immense achievement of ridding the world of human evil would redound to the benefit of all (as cumulative evils have hurt us all) and that we could justly enjoy the better world that would result. Or, a world in which we dissipated many of the evils would be a remarkable place in which we would have undergone such a profound transformation that we would very likely be ready and able to search out opportunities to practice virtue without being goaded by the present occasions of suffering. In such a world a person might be benefited by the perfection achieved by others in the past who attained their remarkable state by transcending unavoidable suffering.

While it is clear that we should not cause others to suffer, and that we alone should determine how ascetic we should be, how much suffering we should expose ourselves to and how we should respond to the suffering that we cannot avoid is an important question.

For most people it is highly unlikely that anyone would choose to subject oneself to the intense suffering that Simone Weil talks about as leading to a mystical experience. Even if she is right that suffering is the key to one's spiritual life, to follow through on such a conviction is a personal

matter. For many people, Viktor Frankl's view that a man should shape his destiny wherever possible, and endure it where necessary is more attractive.

That the loving God, to some degree, should leave it up to us as to how much suffering we should be exposed to, since true human love leaves that decision to the person loved, is not a serious objection. Above we have noted how humans would most likely respond with little enthusiasm to such an opportunity.

Up to now, we have seen suffering and pain explained in many ways: as a means to appreciate being alive, as a necessity, as a challenge to move to a higher level of existence, as a call to greatness which some will answer and others will ignore, as a means to deep insights into oneself, as a reminder of our true destiny, as a communications contact line to the Divinity. These are powerful functions which tempt us to see such evil as something to be accepted at least, if not to be sought out and pursued.

So far we have not considered the claim that the evils humans must suffer are God's punishment for Adam's sin, or what is commonly referred to as the "Fall of Man". In the following chapter we will consider what we call "the punishment problem." There we will see that at times genuine punishment need not be causally rooted in Adam's sin. We humans are rightly punished when we go against the laws of nature or do not pay close enough attention to important things.

Notes

1. John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love,* Ch. 13 and 16.
2. *Ibid*.
3. G. Stanley Kane, "The Failure of Soul-Making Theodicy."
4. Kane, pp. 3-4.
5. Kane, p. 3.
6. C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, Ch. 6.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 95-97.
8. Joseph Campbell says that we cannot say that serpents should not be, but we can rightly kill a poisonous snake which is about to bite us. I agree with Campbell here. For God all things are good and right and just. As a metaphysical observer we must recognize the right of the serpent to exist and act according to its nature. One of the great challenges in life is to say yes to that person or act which in your mind is the most abominable. As a metaphysical observer we have to accept a world in which there is brutality, stupidity, vulgarity, and thoughtlessness. By using the negative way we deny such attributes to God and thereby in a small way perfect our knowledge of him. Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, pp. 66-67.
9. David Ray Griffin, *Evil Revisited*, p. 168.
10. Peter Koestenbaum, *Is There an Answer to Death?* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1976), pp. 54-61.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*
13. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, pp. 178-181.
14. C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, pp. 95-97.

Chapter XIV
The Punishment Problem

It is often claimed that the evils we suffer are God's punishment for our sins. In Albert Camus's *The Plague*, the supposedly learned Jesuit, Father Paneloux, preaches that the plague in Algiers is one of these punishments. God swings a flail round and round. Those who are hit die.1 Although we have often heard this kind of explanation for evil, the matter is not that simple.

The mention of the Jesuit is fitting, for the problem is rooted in theology, in an interpretation of scripture-- original sin, the Fall of man, the Fall from grace--which has come under severe pressure in recent times. This interpretation goes back to St. Augustine and has dominated Christian thought up to our own day: man before the Fall from grace possessed the preternatural gifts of immortality, impassibility (a lack of suffering), integrity (the control of his lower nature), and a special wonderful knowledge.2

According to this view, after the Fall, after man sinned, God punished the human race by removing the gifts. Karl Rahner lists as consequences of the Fall death, concupiscence, error, and suffering.3 Here for our purposes we will consider the gifts and their loss together.

The absence of suffering (Impassibility)—that one does not suffer any pain, disagreeableness, or inconvenience—could be seen as flowing from a kind of powerful Knowledge that would enable us to control our pain, and avoid the sources of trouble. The loss of that gift would mean that humans would suffer, be subject to discomfort, and unpleasantness.

A more enlightened intelligence would enable a person to see ways out of difficulties without harming his/her neighbor or going against his conscience. One would not have to struggle to attain the knowledge that would make it possible to protect oneself from stronger forces of nature and animals. The basic truths for a happy life such as God's existence and the ultimate meaning of life might easily be known. This would support the development of Integrity, the control of one's lower nature and the power to do right by one's neighbor.

Without the gift of knowledge one would not have these advantages. One would see problems fraught with difficulties and would have to struggle for knowledge that would enable one both to protect oneself from the forces of nature and easily to grasp those necessary basic truths. With the loss of integrity one would find it difficult to control one's lower nature and treat others fairly.

Immortality is sometimes said to be the basis of impassibility or the lack of suffering, for according to some theologians who argue from I Cor 15:42, since death will be banished in the resurrection, suffering and discomfort will also disappear.4Immortality meant that after a while on earth the immortal person would pass to the realm beyond without difficulty or anxiety. With the loss of immortality man was barred from the tree of life, and death as we know it today, with its loss and corruption, became man's lot--his body actually had to return to the earth.5

The loss of immortality due to sin can be seen as allowing the fear of death, the fear of facing God after sinning. The immortal person would not be anxious about what happens after death, nor be concerned about the forgiveness of his sins, for, as innocent, he would have no real sins to be forgiven.6 After the Fall, man's easy relaxed relation to God would be replaced by coolness, hesitancy, fear and trembling.

This view, though possible and attractive in a way, remains speculative, unless one endows tradition with an unduly powerful influence. Recent interpretations of the state of humans before and after the Fall by even conservative Christian theologians have moved away from the above position. In general, what is left is an acknowledgement that primitive humans sinned and that

consequently, we all need the saving grace of Christ.7 Missing are the ideas that the evils of death, suffering, error, loss of integrity, and enslavement to the devil follow as God's punishment for one man's (Adam's) sin. Moreover, to be noted here is that some parts of Scripture suggest that all evils do not come to us as God's punishment for the evil that we do.8

So, a more recent view of the Fall might have death, suffering, and the need to struggle for knowledge and integrity as characteristics of the first human beings. Such characteristics would be not the consequences of punishment, not the watering down of superior perfections because of a previous fault. What would remain of the traditional view is, of course, that early humans did evil things--they were sinners.

If we ask how or when they became sinners we come upon various possibilities. Philosophically, the first humans could have been amoral, without a sense of morality, and after a while came upon the ideas of justice, compassion, temperance, and the like. Or, indeed, it is possible that for a long or short time humans were innocent, with common sense and perception, with consideration toward each other, with control of their emotions and without fear of death. It is possible that they had the special gifts of the traditional view but lost them through their own inattention and unappreciativeness or even through a sin of disobedience as the traditional view would have it. Surely, there was a first sin, a first time when one person said to another, "Why did you do this to me?" This could have been a sin of disobedience of one's own conscience. And we might be dealing with "first sins," morally evil actions that were rooted in a human freedom that allowed persons to do what they knew they should not do. The "dark side" of humans--conscious weaknesses unattended to that led to acts of selfishness, greed, inconsiderateness, cheating, and injustice--were very likely found among the early humans, as they are found in the present world. It is possible, too, that the effects of bad example, reprisals, and efforts of good people to protect themselves from those who would harm them increased the amount of human evil. And it does not take much for such a state to deteriorate with the result that human evil--some of it justified, some unjustified-- snowballed.

Or, the gifts or special endowments of the first humans could have been the "germs" of perfections rather than perfections actually realized--perfections in a very nascent state--as the theologian Gardeil suggests. 9

Another part of the traditional view that appears to be more than a possibility is suggested by J. Glenn Gray's remark: that anybody who has walked across a battlefield after the guns have stopped would be oppressed by a spirit of evil that surpasses human malice.10 . . . Or, by C. G. Jung's warning to William Wilson, founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, that a person who is isolated from society and without protection from above, cannot resist the power of evil which we call the "Devil."11 . . . Or, by those like M. Scott Peck who have witnessed exorcisms.12

If we accept the view that the evils of our world are not necessarily due to God's punishment for our sins, then we must see them as possibly integral parts of our world. Here we must recall the distinction between natural evils and human evils.

Natural evils are those we connect with physical suffering, such as that brought upon us by disease, lightning, tornadoes, hurricanes, rockslides, floods, hostile animals, death, and the like. Ignorance is another possible source. They are important for us here because, although they might not be evils inflicted on us because of original sin (in the old understanding of it), they are part of our world. So, we must suffer, die, struggle for knowledge that will allow us to protect ourselves from threatening elements in our environment, and control our dark side.

Natural evils are there in the world, and a theist cannot avoid holding the Creator responsible for them. In the main body of this work, I have attempted to respond to many of the objections to

God's goodness or power stemming from his status as a responsible Creator. One of the most interesting attempts to justify the existence of such evils and of the possibility of human evil has been made by the theologian, John Hick. He follows the view of St. Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons (c. 130 - c. 202), a predecessor of Augustine: the trials of life are not punishment for Adam's sin but an environment for our perfection. The world was never to be considered a paradise, but rather a place of soul-making. God created the world we have with good and evil in it in order to teach us to value one and shun the other.13 Irenaeus distinguishes between humans as a) the image of God, and b) the likeness of God. A human as the image is a rational animal capable of moral judgment and choice, a personal being endowed with moral freedom and responsibility. A human as the likeness of God is our final perfecting by the Holy Spirit. At the beginning we were created at a distance from God; we did not know God directly, we were not created in the direct presence of God with an unclouded awareness of our maker. Our task was to develop our human potentialities by freely responding to the challenges and opportunities of life. In this way we were to develop into the likeness of God.

If we accept this view, then the natural evils function in part as tests and challenges for us. At times we will overcome the obstacles they present. At other times we will fall short and perhaps be forced to endure the consequent suffering. Some might say that God is punishing us when we must undergo the trials of the natural world, but this is a strange way of conceiving punishment. Most of us do not see as punishment what we must go through as a consequence of living in a complex and sometimes dangerous world.

We do not view the world as punishing us when we are caught in a rockslide or flood, when metal fatigue causes our car or plane to crash, or when an oncoming driver has a heart attack and hits us head on. Punishment is more an evil that comes upon us in payment for some shortcoming in our lives, for some failure to do what is to be expected of us. Most of us do not see the above evils as arising from such causes. We accept the imperfect state of our knowledge and understand the difficulties involved in predicting rockslides or floods; usually we are not like the scientist who lost his life because he wanted to be close to an erupting volcano. We do our best to take out of service cars or planes showing dangerous defects. We cannot predict that the driver coming at us is on the verge of a heart attack. That we are vulnerable to such evils shows that we live in a dangerous world in which accidents occur and no one of us can be completely protected at all times. And yet, though chance might have it that any of us are inflicted by the many evils around us, life also is exhilarating, exciting, and offers us tremendous pleasures. As Joseph Campbell has said, life is at times frightening and we suffer, but, by God we are alive!14 And those things that threaten us have, in a way, a right to exist and be what they are.

Even though the evils of our world are not seen as God's direct punishment for our sins, there are ways in which we can understand the evils that we must suffer as rightful punishment.

The first of these senses is that in which we might say that the world punishes us. When humans fail to inform themselves of the workings of the world, or when we disregard the laws of nature, then we must pay the price. If one abuses one's body or one's family, nature has a way of punishing, as well as of teaching and disciplining. In anything we do we might make a mistake, as when we set out sailing or on a picnic without carefully checking a weather report. Having to cope with our capsized boat or our ruined outing can be conceived as punishment for not taking the expected standard precautions for such activity. If we drink too much the night before and wake up with a throbbing head, nature is rightfully punishing us. So too, if we crash our car by speeding on a slippery rain soaked road . . . Often we will hear a person say, "I did a stupid thing, and look what happened." Having to suffer is true punishment, but we see it as justified. Contemporary

thinkers at times talk about evil as undeserved suffering, but this suffering is deserved and hence cannot be called evil. We were inattentive, prone to take too great risks, or stupid. We got what we deserved. Or we can call it justified evil, as when we must endure something that is for our own benefit.

The second way in which we are punished can be seen when we suffer from human evil, when our neighbor harms his fellowman or even himself. It is the kind of evil that is still left from the traditional view of original sin and the Fall. Primitive man was a sinner. Although his first sin possibly did not cause all the physical evil in the world, it almost certainly started a decline toward immorality, toward negligence, anger, greed, laziness and mean-spiritedness toward his neighbor. This inclines us to look upon original sin more as the source of human, not physical, evil. In this sense we can even say that by our mistaken actions we are punishing ourselves.

John Hick says that we were created imperfect, immature, with weaknesses, and that our task in life is to perfect ourselves into the image of God. The Fall occurred during the childhood of man. We should understand it as a fallen state in which childhood weaknesses and moral immaturity result in mistakes and harm done to our neighbors.

This might be right, but when we consider the harm done to each other today, we wonder why after so many years we have not grown out of childhood. Early humans might have had shortcomings which to some degree we have by now corrected. And yet, due to advances in knowledge which give a single person the power to destroy a huge building or blast an airliner out of the sky, modern humans are confronted with complex issues. In one way we are more mature, in another way we are not, as we must face new and disturbing challenges. Science and technical progress give rise to possible, hitherto unimaginable, evils. The new possible sins are original in a very real sense--and frightening. The availability of ever more powerful weapons to back up demands give devastating power to those who are bitter and convinced that they are being exploited, and make them more of a threat to the rest of us. New occasions of evil arise from the vast differences of wealth in the world as the "have nots" can see vividly on television the life styles of the wealthy. They are tempted to envy and to use violence even against those who justly have earned their riches. To forestall such evils the prosperous must overcome the temptation of apathy and the reluctance to share.

Today in our shrinking world, an individual’s mistake, whether it be unavoidable or culpable, can affect not only the person next door but also many others in society. A drug dealer on one’s block, a prostitute with AIDS, or a terrorist with a bomb can cause tremendous damage. Insensitivity, selfishness, lack of compassion, lack of care for others, failures to attain required knowledge can result in undeserved harm to others.

We might be tempted to say that when a person does evil to his neighbor, then his neighbor is being punished for being part of a dysfunctional society. One might say that persons who do evil have become what they are because of the failure of society or our own failure to bring them up properly, to show them enough love and attention, to expose them to moral questions, to adequately educate and discipline them. In short, one might say that the evil we suffer from these persons is deserved, that it is punishment. That we cannot walk certain streets at night or leave our car parked in certain places without fear of dire, even life-threatening consequences, could be seen as punishment for our apathy, our lack of concern for others, and our failure to resolve pressing problems.

In this regard, the large scale of society presents a special problem as we see how, in a complex and densely populated neighborhood, it is difficult to control crime and wipe out evils. Unfortunately, many of the people who suffer thereby have little power and in a sense suffer

undeservedly. However, all of us depend on the talented and brightest among us to afford effective civic leadership. And we know that it can be done once concern, desire, and a willingness to sacrifice are there.

The third way in which we are rightfully punished occurs when we are deliberately punished for having inflicted undeserved evil on others. Our punishment is justified, for we have injured others or violated rightful laws necessary for the orderly existence of society. The arrest and punishment of a drunken driver or someone who races at 50 miles an hour in a school zone is a justified evil.

All of the above senses are relevant to the question of why children suffer. The sense in which the world punishes us for mistakes that we have made can help us to understand why children must suffer. Our failure to attain or be aware of the proper knowledge necessary for parenting and for living a reasonable life, and our failure to control our darker tendencies can do irreparable damage to our children. One might surmise that the world is punishing us for our mistakes by visiting the consequences upon our children who in turn at times cause us grief.

Albert Camus's Father Paneloux in *The Plague* is shaken and changed after seeing the death of a child.15 Paneloux places great weight on God's punishment as the source of the evils that afflict humankind, and this leads him to be confused by the suffering of children. He is troubled because it is unfair that innocent children who have done no evil should be punished, suffer and die. Camus complains that it is not the suffering of a child which is repugnant in itself, but that there is no reason why the child should suffer. No matter to what degree man reformed society, children will still die unjustly. Even though we diminish the sufferings of the world, we can do so in only a limited way, and the death of children will still remain an outrage.16

If this view can stand, that the source of evil can be something other than God punishing us, Camus's complaint that innocent children suffer and die would be undermined. If evil and suffering need not be God's punishment for our sins, then a child's death and suffering is not so much of an outrage. For we could not establish that an innocent person who has done no evil is being punished. This does not solve the problem of evil in regard to children, but, at least in this view, God is not in the position of punishing the innocent, something which offends Camus's sense of justice.

Indeed, there are other reasons why children suffer. They must suffer physical evils because they are physical and biological beings. Biologically, children, like the rest of us, are members of the life world which operates on the principle of the breakdown and assimilation of physical bodies. It is nigh impossible to articulate a world in which children would not be subject to the same laws as the rest of us.

From a creative and intellectual standpoint, our children have the potentiality to far surpass other creatures, but, as humans, they also have physical bodies. This means that not only are they subject to physical laws but also, like all of us, in many respects they are inferior to other physical creatures. An atom, a tiger, a boa constrictor, even a bird or a rock, surpass humans in some sense. When we come into contact with such entities we must yield, sometimes flee, and sometimes suffer. A world in which children were not subject to the same such limitations as the rest of us would be strange, a violation of the laws of nature.

Again, how can children not be subject to the accidents which happen in this world of physical and intellectual creatures. Such are part of life. Nature does not act rigidly--and all of us are either helped or hurt by such events. Many of us accept this kind of world, looking forward to the future, waiting for the outcome of things which are not certain, anticipating defeat or victory, knowing that at any time all that we enjoy might be taken from us. It is not at all clear that a world in which

no accidental happenings occurred, one in which human beings knew everything that would happen in the future, would be a better world.

Again, children must suffer human evil because of their dependence on adults. The society in which a child is born has a profound effect on his/her life. A child might live in a country whose leaders and power factions are unwilling to compromise and bring about peace. If those in power are convinced that their people must wage war in order to assure some future good, then everyone--the innocent and the guilty--must suffer. Since children are exceptionally dependent on society for their survival, when society disintegrates, children, the most needy of all citizens, must do without the necessities of life. In such a case, man, not God, inflicts cruel punishment on himself, and, at times, no member of the human race--adult, aged, or child--can escape it.

It is hard to understand the kind of world in which children would not be affected by their parents or surrogates. How would a child avoid the consequences of a mother's smoking, heavy drinking, or taking drugs during pregnancy? How would a child avoid the abuse and neglect of irresponsible or selfish parents or caregivers? Of course, our mistakes can accumulate and feed back on themselves, putting us in dire straits and making it difficult to get back on track. Mistakes made by human society years ago can be so influential that their effects become embedded and have a powerful influence on us at present. Such mistakes suggest that a world in which children would not suffer is almost inconceivable.

It should also be noted that children do not see suffering necessarily in the manner of an adult. They are inclined to see it as part of life, a mystery like so many other aspects of their existence. The chances are that they do not see suffering as an unjust outrage as Camus would have it.

In addition to the world punishing us, our being punished by the mistakes of our neighbors, and our own punishing the wayward among us, another possibility arises from the need to pay for interior sins. In a world governed by a just God, the person who deliberately inflicts undeserved harm on others is not the only one who should be made to suffer for this conduct. That is, the person who gives in to inward evils such as hate, envy, jealousy, unjustified anger, wishing evil to others, also deserves punishment. William Alston reminds us that such faults concerning intentions, motives, and attitudes are more serious than failings in outward behavior. He claims that in this context the self-centered refusal or failure to make God the center of one's life is said to be the greatest sin. The important point here, however, is that such sins are to a great extent undetectable--what a person intends and wishes is for the most part hidden from the rest of us--they can be called "secret sins." It is true that to a great extent we might understand a person's inner life from a record of his outward behavior.17 And yet, even this record is not available to us--clearly, we have incomplete knowledge of a person's inner life. Consequently, our judgment that a person's suffering is too great when compared to his sinfulness is of questionable value.18We do not accurately know the state of another's soul and have no way of knowing that the evil that he/she is suffering is really undeserved. The possibility remains that it would be right and proper for God to punish such persons.

Notes

1. Albert Camus, *The Plague* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966) Part II, Ch. 3, pp. 78-84.
2. T.R. Heath, "Adam" (In Theology) *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* 1, p. 114.
3. Karl Rahner, "Original sin, polygenism, and freedom," *Theology Digest*, Spring, 1973.
4. Corcoran, C. J. "Impassibility," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 7 (Washington: The Catholic University of America, 1967), p. 394.

5. I. Hunt, *ibid.*, p. 816.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 816.

7. Thomas Bokenkrotter, *Dynamic Catholicism* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), Pp. 300-303. Cf. George Vandervelde,*Original Sin: Two Major Trends in Contemporary Roman Catholic Interpretation* (Washington: University Press of America, 1981).

8. Barry Whitney, *Evil and the Process God* (Lewiston, N. Y.: Edward Mellen Press, 1985), p. 27. In Ecclesiastes 9:2, we see that the same fate befalls the just and the unjust; in Matthew 5:45, that God makes the sun rise on the good and bad alike; and in Luke 13:1-3, where Christ says that the Galileans and those who were killed when the tower fell upon them did not die because they were more guilty than others. Cf. p. 27.

9. Heath, "Adam," *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1, p. 115.

10. *The Warriors*, p. 51.

11. C.G. Jung, "Letter to William G. Wilson, Jan 30, 1961," *The Parabola Book of Healing*, Introduction by L. E. Sullivan (New York: Continuum, 1994), p. 132.

12. M. Scott Peck, *The People of the Lie*, p. 183 and Ch. 5

13. Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, p. 220.

14. Joseph Campbell with Bill Moyers, *The Power of Myth*, p. 114.

15. Albert Camus, *The Plague*, pp. 180-187.

16. Albert Camus, *The Rebel*, trans. Anthony Bower (New York: Vintage, 1960), p. 303.

17. William Alston, "The Inductive Argument from Evil," *Philosophical Perspectives*, 5, *Philosophy of Religion*, 1991, ed. James Tomberlin (Atascadero, Ca.: Ridgeview Publishing Co., 1991), pp. 29-67, pp. 37-38. Cf. Elenore Stump, "The Problem of Evil," *Faith and Philosophy*, 2, no. 4, (Oct. 1985).

18. *Ibid*.

Chapter XV
Consequences

Where does all of this leave us in the problematic of God and the challenge of evil?

One thing that appears quickly in our attempt to solve this problem is the importance of the subjective-objective dimension of good and evil. Our judgment of evil is based on our capacity to distinguish between what is and what should be. The way we look at things can influence to a considerable degree whether we see the problem of evil as a real or pseudo-problem, or a problem that is not solvable.

Our training, our personality, and our desires color our response to evil. The subjective way we look at things can strengthen or weaken the probability of our overcoming evil and can influence the possibility of controlling the impact of physical suffering and of dealing with the evil done to us by others. It can influence our response to unexpected evil and evildoers, and our judgment of the amount of evil in the world.

If we accept the judgment of good and evil as thoroughly subjective, then the problem of evil is so radically altered that it disappears. This is hard to accept, however. The subjective-objective complexities and difficulties do not prevent most people from designating some actions as really evil. That each person sees evil and good against the background of his own upbringing and culture should not dispose us to think that anything is morally permissible just as long as we believe it to be so. No matter how different cultures are from each other, the human need to live in a society with others places limits upon one's conduct. There are some evils that most of us accept as objective; we cannot dissolve the problem of God and evil in a cloud of subjectivity.

No doubt, we have to acknowledge the importance of the nature of good, understood as the ideal and how well the Judeo-Christian God fulfills a notion of the ideal God. Since tradition has put strong emphasis on God as a person, in the problem of God and evil, we must try to gain an insight into the goodness of the divine person. Philosophically, the beginning of this process is an attempt to understand who is a good human person.

To what degree our good man or woman is different from someone in another culture is a major project in comparative morality which we cannot go into here. We find that our good person sees life with God as her destiny. She exercises a certain amount of self-discipline and rejects an extreme materialism. She has a respect for freedom and human dignity, a commitment to such virtues as truth, justice, courage, patience, and gratitude. She has an ear for the findings of science, a realization of how much she does not know, an openness to how advancement in virtue can be stimulated by unavoidable evils, and a respect for being put to the test. This results in a cautious attitude of mind that sees little or no reason for doubting the goodness or omnipotence of the Creator.

Our good person is not expected to bring about the impossible. Nor is she under an obligation to accomplish the greatest good in every task she undertakes. At times, she cannot avoid bringing about a genuine evil, as, e.g., when that evil is necessary for the achievement of a greater good. In like manner, we do not expect the Creator God to do the impossible, to bring about the absolutely greatest good, or to see to it that nobody suffers evil.

We must respect the difficulty of accepting God as a moral agent. Although God is not a moral agent and not a person in the same way humans are, some similarities must be acknowledged. God, who transcends the category of action, still can be imagined as having alternatives, as being able to create this world rather than some other, or not to create at all. We see God as having the kind

of freedom a moral agent has when he is doing what he is supposed to do, or when one is in the presence of the proper object of his will, which in the case of God is himself. We can ask whether he should create the best possible world. In some sense, then, we can think of him as a moral agent, as having obligations and functioning as a person who, like a moral agent, can succeed or fail.

We cannot rationally accept God's omnipotence as meaning that he can do anything and everything absolutely. To accept the claim that God should be able to do anything-- even the impossible--would be to give the impossible a respect and status that is rightfully rejected by human thinkers. We should not expect the omnipotent God to bring about contradictions (whose referent is nothing). A God who is absolutely unlimited in any and every sense could be identified with everything else. Moreover, if God could do anything and everything absolutely, then he would be able to reconcile his goodness and power with evil. We might see the problem of evil as genuine from our point of view, but we would know that even from our point of view it is solvable because contradictions have no standing with the Creator God. The problem would not be genuine, for no tension between evil and a good and omnipotent God could exist in the presence of such an absolute God. We would know that a contradiction in our eyes is something that can be easily overcome by him.

Expecting that God be able to bring about anything and everything--absolutely--moves us away from a reasoned view of God and into the mystical and mysterious. True, it has a definite advantage, for it acknowledges the transcendence and infinity of the Divine. From a rational point of view, however, it solves the problem of God and evil at too great a price, for it brings the mystical and mysterious into the project too early, its proper place being at the point where reason can take us no further.

Central to our view is that God's goodness alone can move his will, and hence, nobody should criticize him for not bringing about conceivable or merely non-contradictory worlds other than our own, e.g., worlds with different natural laws. God is under no obligation to do so. We have more reason to complain if God does not bring about states of affairs that are really possible, those that are in accordance with the present natural laws.

It is possible that a person could live without doing anything morally wrong, if he or she received a special help or grace, a gift freely given by the Creator. But the existence of persons with genuine freedom and no special help or a help that is ignored or rejected forces us to the conclusion that there are some kinds of world that God cannot bring about. In exercising our freedom, we humans determine to some extent what kind of world is actualized. We cannot really fault the Creator for not bringing about a world without moral evil.

In our approach to the problem of God and evil, we are committed to both divine and human freedom. We do not see how good persons among us can be expected to produce the best possible action at any and every moment of time. This would be too burdensome; actions that are non-obligatory and freely performed exist and rightly so. In a similar way, we think that God, should have this kind of freedom; he does not have to create the best possible world. Even so, great difficulties face us if we should try to show that this world is or is not the best possible.

I do not see how one can establish that the amount of evil in the world far outweighs the amount of goodness. Despite the difficulties caused by selective perception, training, experience, culture and one's outlook on life, I judge the amount of good relative to evil to be overwhelmingly great.

Nor can I see how the existence of genuinely pointless evil can be justified. Those who advocate such a position must answer the objection arising from limited human knowledge. Humans have seen so little of the record of their existence that it is not unlikely that many possible

reasons for what happens elude us. Moreover, the large number of apparently pointless evils would require massive divine interventions to set them aright, with the result that we could never count on things occurring in a regular fashion.

To eliminate all gratuitous evil amounts to making a significantly different world. I do not think it sufficient to ask for the elimination of this or that evil without articulating in considerable detail its consequences, the systematic far-reaching changes in the new world. Moreover, even if such worlds could be laid out before us, we could not demand that a good and omnipotent God create them.

The complaint that God should make known to us why he allows us to suffer each evil cannot be justified. A world in which we knew the reason for every evil would not necessarily be a better world than our own world, for in it we would be inclined to do things mainly in order to gain a reward or to avoid a punishment. Compassion, warmth, and generosity would be less valued. There are numerous objections to a world in which God made his existence and desires more clearly known to us.

As long as God does not give humans a special help beyond our nature, it is impossible that God make humans with the present degree of freedom and see to it that they always do what is right. If we lessened human freedom we would lose the value of numerous good actions.

Nor should we complain that God has created a world in which humans can wage war. Although in many instances war cannot be justified, possible worlds in which human freedom was so limited that wars would be impossible are impractical and unrealistic. A world with no violence would do away with the powers of nature. One in which violence against humans was impossible would be strange and puzzling and effectively thwart all human action. Likewise unsatisfactory is a world in which humans could not be greedy, unfaithful, malicious, and the like, and a world in which, when things got too vicious, God would step in and stop the violence. There is also good reason to think that we humans, if we cared enough, have the power to put a stop to wars which devastate mankind. The different worlds which objectors might propose in an effort to eliminate war are at best highly questionable alternatives to the present world.

Persons need not be destroyed by suffering. Accepting the challenge of suffering can result in a deepening of self-knowledge and a growth in dignity. Unavoidable evils can be the occasion of the development of solid virtue. Suffering can stimulate an appreciation of what it means to be alive, help us to realize the value of the conquest of obstacles, and remind us of our true destiny. How we handle it can show us the extent to which we have developed virtue. That children suffer is a reflection of their physical humanity and their dependence on adults. Suffering as punishment is limited to the consequences of mistakes that we make in our interactions with the world of nature and our failure to avoid involvement with natural forces more powerful than we.

It is difficult to see how the virtue one can develop in the face of unavoidable natural evil can be comparable to that developed in a world without evil. The difference between the courage asked of a woman who has just lost her husband in a mine accident and the sprinter who is forbidden to take part in the Olympic games is profound. The possibility of suffering a real loss of some consequence forces us to live at a deeper level of existence.

Although the courage arising from freely chosen suffering is of greater value than that arising from unavoidable suffering, it is highly doubtful that humans would freely choose to suffer if it were not forced upon them. Most of us try to distance ourselves from conditions that call for the exercise of unusual courage, patience, compassion, and the like. We try to protect ourselves because we think that the value of a truly free life is great, that should suffering be important for our development, we alone should decide how much of it we should seek. If we had our say, we

would want a world without the need to respond to such powerful challenges to virtue, but this would very likely result in a lesser development of virtue.

The evils that we suffer need not be considered God's punishment for the evil that we humans have done. And yet, punishment can be the proper expression of what happens to us when we make mistakes in dealing with the natural world. When we abuse our body, nature has a way of punishing us; when we disregard the laws of nature we must pay the price. Or, we can say that we are being punished when our neighbor harms us unjustly; modern technical progress enables others to hurt us severely. When this happens, we or other humans, not God, are the source of our punishment. Of course, we rightly punish others when they disobey the laws necessary for the orderly existence of society. Finally, interior evils that are hidden from the rest of us, such as hate, envy, and wishing evil to others, should be punished by the Divinity. All of these shortcomings have consequences for our children and contribute to our understanding of why children suffer.

In these pages, I have tried to clarify the ideas of good and omnipotence as they can be applied to the Judeo-Christian-Islamic God and to answer a number of the objections to His existence. Many of the objector's proposed alternative worlds appear to fail as worlds that a good and omnipotent God should have created. This, in turn, should lead one to a more sophisticated understanding of the Creator, a better appreciation of the Divinity, the Source of a theist's life and being.

References

Adams, Robert. "Must God Create for the Best?" *Philosophical Review*, 81, (1972).

Ahern, M. B. *The Problem of Evil*. New York: Schocken, 1971.

Alston, William. "The Inductive Argument from Evil and the Human Cognitive Condition," *Philosophical Perspectives, 5--Philosophy of Religion*, 1991, ed. James B. Tomberlin. Atascadero, Ca.: Ridgeview Publishing Co., 1991.

Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa contra Gentiles*, II, trans. James Anderson. Garden City: Doubleday, 1956.

. *Summa contra Gentiles*, III, trans. Vernon Bourke. Garden City: Doubleday, 1956..

. *De potentia, Quaestiones disputatae*, vol. II. cura P. Bazzi et. al. Taurini: Marietti, 1949.

. *Summa theologiae*, I, ed. P. Caramello. Taurini: Marietti, 1948.

. *De Veritate, Quaestiones disputatae*, vol. 1 cura et studio, R. Spiazzi . Taurini: Marietti, 1953.

Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, 5th ed. Pondecherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1970.

Beauchamp, Thomas and Childress, James. *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, 4th ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Becker, Ernest. *Escape from Evil*. New York: The Free Press, 1975.

Beecher, Henry K. "Pain in Men Wounded in Battle," *Annals of Surgery*, 96, (1946), pp. 104-105. *Measurement of Subjective Responses: Quantitative Effects of Drugs*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1959. Frederick J. Evans, "The Power of the Sugar Pill," *Psychology Today*, April, 1974, pp. 55-59.

Berdyaev, Nicolas. *The Divine and the Human*. London: Geoffrey Bles, 1949.

Bokenkrotter, Thomas. *Dynamic Catholicism*. New York: Doubleday, 1992.

Bradbury, Ray. *Fahrenheit 451*. New York: Ballantine, 1953.

Brophy vs. New England Sinai Hospital, Inc., *Amicus Curiae Brief*, American Academy of Neurology, Minneapolis, (1986).

Buber, Martin. *Good and Evil*, Two Interpretations. New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1953.

. *Between Man and Man*, trans. R. G. Smith. Great Britain: Collins-Fontana, 1961.

Bullock, T. H. "Afterthoughts on Animal Minds," D. R. Griffin, Ed. *Animal Mind--Human Mind*. New York: Springer- Verlag, 1982.

Campbell, C. A. *On Selfhood and Godhood*. London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd.: 1957.

Campbell, Joseph with Bill Moyers, *The Power of Myth*, ed. Betty Sue Flowers. N. Y. Doubleday, 1988.

Camus, Albert. *The Rebel*, trans. Anthony Bower. New York: Vintage, 1960.

. *The Plague*, trans. Stuart Gilbert. Harmondsworth, G.B.: Penguin, 1966.

Carruthers, Peter. "Brute Experience," *Journal of Philosophy*, 86 (1989), pp. 258-269.

. *The Animals Issue*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Cope, Sir Zachary, M.D. *The Early Diagnosis of the Acute Abdomen*, 14th ed. Preface. London: Oxford University Press, 1972.

Corcoran, C. J. ?Impassibility,? *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 7. Washington: The Catholic University of America, 1967.

Cranford, Ronald, M. D. "The Persistent Vegetative State: The Medical Reality," *Hastings Center Report*, 18, no. 1 (Feb. 1988).

Daley, Robert. "The Risktakers," *Playboy*, June 1969.

Davies, Brian. *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1982.
Davies, Paul and Gribben, John. *The Matter Myth*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992.
Dennett, Daniel. *Brainchildren?Essays on Designing Minds*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998.
Dewey, John. *Experience and Nature*. New York: Dover, 1958.
Dostoevsky, Fyodor. "Rebellion," *The Brothers Karamazov*. New York: Bantam, 1970.
Ewing, A. C. *The Definition of Goo*. New York: Macmillan, 1947.
Farrer, Austin. *Love Almighty and Ills Unlimited*. New York: Doubleday, 1961.
Flew, Antony. "Divine Omnipotence and Human Freedom," *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*, ed. A. Flew and A. MacIntyre. London: SCM Press, 1955.
. "Possibility, Creation, and "Temptation," *The Personalist*, 52 (1971).
Flint, Thomas and Freddoso, Alfred. "Maximal Power," *The Existence and Nature of God*, ed. Alfred Freddoso. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983.
Frankl, Viktor. *Man's Search for Meaning, an Introduction to Logotherapy*. New York: Washington Square Press, 1965.
. *The Doctor and the Soul*, 2nd ed. New York: Bantam, 1965.
Geach, Peter. *Providence and Evil*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.
Gray, J. Glenn. *The Warriors, Reflections on Men in Battle*. New York: Harper and Row, 1967.
Gibson, A. Boyce. "Two Strands in Natural Theology," *Process and Divinity*, ed. Wm. Reese and Eugene Freeman. La Salle, Ill. Open Court, 1964.
Griffin, D. R. *Animal Mind--Human Mind*. New York: Springer-Verlag, 1982.
Griffin, David. *God, Power, and Evil*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976.
. *Evil Revisited--Responses and Reconsiderations*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991.
Hall, Douglas. *God and Human Suffering--An Exercise in the Theology of the Cross*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing, 1986.
Harris, Errol. *The Foundations of Metaphysics in Science*. New York: Humanities Press, 1965.
. "Atheism and Theism," *Tulane Studies in Philosophy xxvi* (1977).
Harrison, Peter. "Do Animals Feel Pain?," *Philosophy*, 66 (1991).
Hartshorne, Charles. *Natural Theology for Our Time*. LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court, 1967.
Heath, T. R. "Adam" *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* 1.
Herzberg, A. J. "Tweestroomenland." J. Presser, *The Destruction of the Dutch Jews*, trans. A. Pomerans. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1969.
Heyd, David. *Supererogation--Its Status in Ethical Theory*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1982.
Hick, John. *Evil and the God of Love*. Great Britain: Collins, 1968, pp. 370-371. *God and the Universe of Faiths*. Glasgow: Collins, 1977.
. "God, Evil and Mystery," *Religious Studies*, 3 (1967-1968).
. *Philosophy of Religion*, 2nd ed. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973.
Hillman, H. *Scientific Undesirability of Painful Experiments*. Zurich: WFPA, 1970.
Hilts, Philip J. "French Doctor Testing AIDS Vaccine on Himself," *Washington Post*, March 10, 1987, p. A 7. Beauchamp and Childress.
Hitterdale, Larry. "The Problem of Evil and the Subjectivity of Values are Incompatible," *International Philosophical Quarterly*, xviii, no. 4.
Hume, David. *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, Part X, Essential Works of David Hume*, ed. Ralph Cohen. New York: Bantam, 1965.

Hunt, I. *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 7.
Huxley, Aldous. *Brave New World*. New York: Bantam Books, 1958.
Irving, David. *The Destruction of Dresden*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1964.
James, John. *Why Evil?--A Biblical Approach*. Baltimore: Penguin, 1960.
Jones, James H. "The Tuskegee Legacy: AIDS and the Black Community." *The Hastings Report*, 22, Nov.-Dec. 1082.
Joyce, George H. *Principles of Natural Theology*, 3rd ed. London: Longmans, Green, 1957.
Jung, C. G. "After the Catastrophe," *Collected Works*, vol. 10. Princeton: Bollingen, 1970.
. "Letter to William G. Wilson, Jan 30, 1961," *The Parabola Book of Healing*, Introduction by L. E. Sullivan. New York: Continuum, 1994.
Kane, G. Stanley. "The Failure of Soul-Making Theodicy," *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion*, 6 (Spring, 1975).
Katz, Jay, ed., *Experimentation with Human Beings*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1972. Cf. Tom Beauchamp and James Childress, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, p. 495.
Khamara, E. J. "In Defense of Omnipotence," *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 20, no. 112 (July, 1978).
Keele, C. and Smith, R. *The Assessment of Pain in Man and Animals*. London: Livingston, 1962. Cf. Griffin, *Animal Mind . . . .*
Kekes, John. *Facing Evil*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990.
Koestenbaum, Peter. *Is There an Answer to Death?* Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1976.
Kubler-Ross, Elisabeth. *On Death and Dying*. New York: Macmillan, 1969.
La Croix, Richard. "Unjustified Evil and God's Choice," *Sophia*, xiii, no. 1, (April, 1974).
Leibniz, Gottfried. *Theodicy, Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil*, ed. A. Farrer, trans. E. M. Huggard. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951.
. "On the Ultimate Origination of Things," *The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, trans. Robert Latta. London: Oxford University Press, 1925.
Lengyel, Olga. *Five Chimneys, the Story of Auschwitz*. n.l. Ziff-Davis, 1947.
Lewis, C. S. *The Problem of Pain*. New York: Macmillan, 1976.
Mackie, J. L. *The Miracle of Theism*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1988.
Madden, Edward and Hare, Peter. *Evil and the Concept of God*. Springfield, Ill.: C. C. Thomas, 1968.
Madden, Edward. "The Riddle of God and Evil," *Current Philosophical Issues, Essays in Honor of Curt John Ducasse*, ed. F. C. Dommeyer. Springfield, Ill.: C. C. Thomas, 1966.
Martin, Michael. *Atheism--A Philosophical Justification*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989.
. "Reichenbach on Natural Evil," *Religious Studies*, 24.
McCloskey, H. J. "God and Evil," *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 10, no. 39 (1960). Reprinted in Baruch Brody, *Readings in the Philosophy of Religion*, 2nd ed. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972.
. "On Being an Atheist," *Philosophy and Contemporary Issues*, 2nd ed. J. R. Burr and M. Goldinger ed. New York: Macmillan, 1976.
. "The Problem of Evil," *J. Bible and Religion*, vol. xxx, 3 (1962).
McMahon, William. "The Problem of Evil and the Possibility of a Better World," *J. of Value Inquiry*, 25 (1969).
McQuillen, Michael. "Can people who are unconscious or in the `vegetative state' perceive pain," *Issues in Law and Medicine*, 6 (Spring, 1991).

Morris, Thomas V. "Duty and Divine Goodness," *The Concept of God*, ed. Thomas V. Morris. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.
New York Times, Sept. 4, 1990, B 1.
Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Penguin, 1973.
Noddings, Nel. *Women and Evil*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989.
Peck, M. Scott. *People of the Lie--The Hope for Healing Human Evil*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983.
Penz, Rebecca "Rules and Values and the Problem of Evil," *Sophia*, 21, no. 2 (July, 1982).
Pike, Nelson, ed. *God and Evil*. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964.
Pittenger, Norman. *Catholic Faith in a Process Perspective*. Maryknoll, N. Y.: Orbis Books, 1981.
Plantinga, Alvin. *God, Freedom, and Evil*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1977.
. *The Nature of Necessity*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1964.
Poggio, C. and Mountcastle, V. "A Study of the functional contributions of the lemniscal and spinothamic systems. . . . *Bull. Hopkins Hosp*. 106:266, (1960), p. 302. In Dallas Pratt, M. D., *Alternatives to Pain In Experiments on Animals*. n.l.: Argus Archives, 1980.
Pontifex, Mark. "The Question of Evil," *Prospect for Metaphysics*, ed. Ian Ramsey. New York: Philosophical Library, 1961.
Proctor, Samuel D. "Evil : the Unfulfillment of the Good," *Facing Evil--Light at the Core of Darkness*, ed. Paul Woodruff and Harry Wilmer. LaSalle, Ill.: 1994.
Rahner, Karl. "Original Sin, Polygenism, and Freedom," *Theology Digest*, Spring, 1973.
Read, Piers Paul. *Alive, the Story of the Andes Survivors*. New York: Avon, 1975.
Regan, Tom. *The Case for Animal Rights*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983.
Reichenbach, Bruce. *Evil and a Good God*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1982.
. "Natural Evils and Natural Law: a Theodicy for Natural Evils," *International Philosophical Quarterly*, xvi, no. 2 (June, 1976).
Rowe, William. *Philosophy of Religion--an Introduction*, 2nd ed. Belmont, Ca.: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1993.
Royce, Josiah. *Studies of Good and Evil*. Hamden, Ct: Archon Books, 1964.
Rubenstein, Richard. *After Auschwitz*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966.
. *The Cunning of History*. New York: Harper and Row, 1975.
Russell, Bruce. "The Persistent Problem of Evil," *Faith and Philosophy*, 6, no. 2 (April, 1989).
Sartre, Jean Paul. *The Devil and the Good Lord*, trans. K. Black. New York: Alfred Knopf, Inc., 1960.
Schlesinger, George. "Omnipotence and Evil: an Incoherent Problem," *Sophia*, iv, no. 3 (October, 1965).
Shea, W. "God, Evil and Professor Schlesinger," *J. Value Inquiry*, 4 (1970).
Singer, Peter. *Practical Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
. *Animal Liberation*. New York: Discuss-Avon, 1977.
Siwek, Paul. *The Philosophy of Evil*, New York: The Ronald Press, 1956.
Smart, Ninian. "Omnipotence, Evil, and Superman," *God and Evil*, ed. N. Pike. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964.
Sontag, Frederick. *The God of Evil--An Argument from the Existence of the Devil*. New York: Harper and Row, 1970.
Steiner, Jean Francois. *Treblinka*. London: Corgi Books, 1969.
Stump, Eleonore. "The Problem of Evil," *Faith and Philosophy*, 2, no. 4, Oct. 1985.

Swartz, Norman. *Beyond Experience--Metaphysical Theories and Philosophical Constraints*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991. Cf. David F. Lindsley and J. Eric Holmes, *Basic Human Neurophysiology*. New York: Elsevier Science Publishing Co., 1984, p. 117. Peter Nathan, *The Nervous System*, 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, p. 105. Dale M. Atrens and Ian S. Curthoys, *The Neurosciences and Behavior*, 2nd ed. Sydney: Academic Press, 1982.

Swinburne, Richard. "The Problem of Evil," *Contemporary Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Stephen Cahn and David Shatz. New York: Oxford University Press, 1982.

. *The Coherence of Theism*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1986.

. *The Existence of God*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1989.

Tan Tei Wei, "The Question of a Cosmophoric Utopia," *The Personalist*, 55 (Autumn, 1974).

Tennant, F. R. *Philosophical Theology*, vol. II, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956.

Vandervelde, George. *Original Sin: Two Major Trends in Contemporary Roman Catholic Interpretation*. Washington: University Press of America, 1981.

Veatch, Robert M. "Experimental Pregnancy," *Hastings Center Report*, Vol. I (June 1971), pp. 2-3. Robert Hunt and John Arras, ed., *Ethical Issues in Modern Medicine*. Palo Alto: Mayfield, 1977.

Walhout, Donald. *The Good and the Realm of Values*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978.

Watts, Alan. *Nature, Man, and Woman*. New York: Vintage, 1970.

Weil, Simone. *Waiting for God*, trans. Emma Craufurd. New York: Harper, 1973.

. "Letter to Joe Bousquet," in *The Simone Weil Reader*, ed. George Panichas. New York: David McKay, 1977.

Weinstock, Jerome. "Must God Create the Best Possible World?", *Sophia*, xiv, no. 2 (July, 1975).

Whitney, Barry. *Evil and the Process God*. Lewiston, N. Y.: Edward Mellen Press, 1985.

Wykstra, Stephen. "The Humean Obstacle to Evidential Arguments from Suffering: On Avoiding the Evils of `Appearances'." *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion*, 16, (1984).