

God is (by definition) omnipotent (that is, can do anything logically possible), omniscient, and perfectly free (and so perfectly good). The world contains much evil – both intrinsically bad states (e.g. suffering) and wrongdoing (e.g. humans causing the suffering of others or allowing it to occur.) I argue that the occurrence of these evils is not a good objection to the existence of God.

I suggest that an agent P may allow an evil E to occur, while remaining perfectly good, so long as:

1. There is some good G, such that it is impossible for P to bring about G in any other way except by allowing E (or an evil equally bad) to occur (e.g. God cannot give you the opportunity freely to choose to benefit or hurt me (G) except by allowing me to suffer (E) if you choose to hurt me.)
2. P does everything he can to bring about G (e.g. God gives you the above free choice).
3. P has the right to allow E to occur. (God's right arises from his being our benefactor throughout our whole existence in this life and in a life after death.)
4. The expected negative value of P allowing E to occur does not exceed the expected positive good value of G.

Among the good states which God allowing evils to occur makes possible are humans having the free choice of whether to cause good or evil to ourselves and others (including having the choice of how to cope with our own suffering), and the choice of whether to help others who suffer either as a result of the actions of other humans or through natural processes, and the choice of whether to use our reason to discover and cure evils caused by natural processes, and in all these ways to form good or bad characters; and the great good of being of use to others (not merely by what we do freely but by what we do unfreely and by what we suffer).