

evil and the divine exercise of omnipotence

(a critique of mackie's "evil and omnipotence")

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Abstract

In his classic 1955 paper "Evil and Omnipotence," Mackie maintains that since the problem of evil is a necessary result of the incompatibility of the belief in the existence of a wholly good and powerful God with the belief in the reality of evil, *the only* adequate solution to the problem of evil is to deny either one of these two beliefs. In this paper, I attempt to dissolve the problem of evil, as formulated by Mackie, by explaining away the alleged incompatibility between the two beliefs. I advance two arguments against Mackie's formulation: its failure to consider that God, being a perfect being, has other divine attributes (in addition to being wholly good and powerful) which come into play in the manner by which He exercises His omnipotence; and its confusion of God's decision to exercise His omnipotence in certain ways with the limits of His power (or, in particular, its confusion of what God decides not to do with what He cannot do).

Keywords

evil, omnipotence, god, belief, incompatibility



Introduction

The problem of evil generally refers to the perceived incompatibility arising from holding two beliefs: the belief in the existence or reality of evil and the belief in the existence of God.¹ The alleged incompatibility arises in consideration of what God's attributes of goodness and omnipotence entail. As goodness is opposed to evil, God, being wholly good, should eliminate evil in all its forms or should prevent its occurrence; and being all-powerful, God should be able to completely eliminate evil in all its forms. Thus, if there is a God having these two attributes then evil cannot exist; or if evil is real then there cannot be a God having these two attributes. But since a God that does not have one or both of these two attributes of being all good and powerful is not really a God, then it follows that if God exists then evil cannot exist; or if evil exists then God cannot exist.

Now, as the reality of evil, as exemplified by human sufferings and wicked deeds as well as by natural tragedies, is more observable and perhaps more immediate to our consciousness and thus is more difficult to deny, some regard the problem of evil as constituting one strong argument against the existence of God. Because of the undeniability of the occurrence of evil, some consider the problem of evil as a more serious objection to the existence of God compared to objections raised against the standard proofs for the existence of God (such as Aquinas' five cosmological proofs, Anselm's and Descartes' ontological proof, and Kant's moral proof); and perhaps a more serious

¹ Nowadays, it is customary to distinguish between the logical and evidential forms of the problem of evil (see, for instance, Howard-Snyder 1996). Mackie's approach (as well as Plantinga's response to Mackie's) is the paradigm example of an approach working within the logical form of the problem of evil. The approach of William Rowe (1996a, 1996b), in contrast, is the paradigm example of an approach working within the evidential form of the problem of evil. Both forms actually deal with the alleged logical inconsistency between God's attributes of omnipotence and omnibenevolence and the occurrence of evil in the world, which renders theism or belief in God questionable. Their main difference concerns their focus. The logical form is focused on showing, proving, and resolving, the said logical inconsistency; while the evidential form is focused on showing how the occurrence of a tremendous amount of evil actually occurring in the world, such as the pointless sufferings of humans and animals, makes it very unlikely that a benevolent God exists.

argument for atheism compared to the arguments advanced by some Freudians, existentialists, and Marxists.

According to J. L. Mackie,² theists may just respond to the criticisms raised against the standard proofs for God's existence that their belief in God is anchored on some grounds higher than what are assumed in these proofs (the grounds of reason and certain alleged facts about the world such as its rational design and causal order). These higher grounds refer to faith, divine revelation, and religious experiences. In light of such, even granting the plausibility of the criticisms against these proofs, theists can claim that their system of beliefs, in which the belief in the existence of God is the core, is untouched and remains intact. With the problem of evil, it is, however, a different story; for what this problem puts into question is the very coherence of the theistic system of beliefs. If theists thus fail to resolve this problem, they in effect will be holding contradictory beliefs. And there is more irrationality in holding contradictory beliefs than holding beliefs that cannot be rationally or empirically demonstrated. Accordingly, it is a stronger objection to the existence of God to show that the belief in such existence leads to a contradiction than showing that such a belief has no rational or empirical basis. In this consideration, it is no wonder why some people are driven to atheism by the problem of evil more than any other possible reason or argument. That there is evil and suffering in the world, as it were, is a stronger reason to deny the existence of God than the world's lack of first cause or grand designer.

Mackie contends that the two beliefs—the beliefs in the existence of God and of evil—are irreconcilable and thus claims that the only adequate solution to the problem of evil is to deny either one of these two beliefs. In this paper, I shall cite and elaborate on two weaknesses of Mackie's formulation of the problem. The first is its failure to consider that God, being a perfect being, has other divine attributes (in addition to being wholly good and powerful) which come into play in His divine exercise of His omnipotence. The second is its confusion of God's exercise of His omnipotence with the limits of His power, or of what God decides (or chooses) not to do with what He cannot do. My

² Mackie, J. L. 1955. "Evil and Omnipotence." *Mind*, New Series, 64 (254) (1955): 200-212.

discussion shall be divided into two parts. In the first part, I shall review the classic formulation of Mackie of the problem of evil as well as his analysis of the problem. In the second part, I shall present my objections to Mackie's formulation of the problem using a simple illustration.

I. Mackie's Formulation of the Problem

Mackie formulates the problem of evil in terms of the contradiction entailed by the following propositions:

- P1. God is omnipotent.
- P2. God is wholly good.
- P3. Evil exists.

The contradiction, in particular, refers to the fact that when any two of these propositions are taken to be true the third or remaining one becomes false. The contradiction can occur in three ways; namely:

Contradiction 1: If (P1) God is omnipotent and (P2) He is wholly good then evil does not exist; but (P3) evil exists.

Contradiction 2: If (P1) God is omnipotent and (P3) evil exists then God is not wholly good; but (P2) God is wholly good.

Contradiction 3: If (P2) God is wholly good and (P3) evil exists then God is not omnipotent; but (P1) God is omnipotent.

To make the contradiction more explicit, Mackie adds two more propositions that qualify the first two propositions.³ Thus:

- P4. There are no limits to what an omnipotent thing can do.
- P5. Good is opposed to evil, in that a good thing always eliminates evil as far as it can.

³ Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," 201.

As P4 and P5 qualify P1 and P2 respectively, the “thing” referred to in P4 and P5 must refer to God. P4 qualifies P1, because if God’s omnipotence has limits the elimination of certain evils may be part of these limits. This will justify the existence of evil, for no contradiction arises here. On the other hand, P5 qualifies P2, because if God’s goodness is not opposed to certain types evil then this will justify the existence of evil, for no contradiction arises here. Now from P4 and P5, Mackie infers the proposition “A good and omnipotent thing eliminates evil completely,” which then clearly contradicts the existence of evil. To put this in a standard argument form:

God, being wholly good, eliminates evil as far as He can.
 God, being omnipotent, can do anything.

Therefore, God, being wholly good and omnipotent, eliminates evil completely.

The contradiction can now be clearly stated as:

God, who must (being wholly good) and can (being omnipotent) eliminate evil completely, exists.
 Evil exists.

Propositions 1 to 5 (P1 to P5) are thus taken by Mackie to be the *constituent propositions* of the problem of evil. They are, for Mackie, the basic propositions that constitute or that give rise to the problem of evil. On the basis of these propositions, Mackie then divides the proposed solutions to the problem of evil, designed to eliminate the contradiction entailed by these constituent propositions, into two kinds; namely, the *adequate* and the *fallacious* solutions.⁴ The adequate solutions are those that *explicitly* and *consistently* reject at least one of the constituent propositions. Mackie considers them adequate since in rejecting at least one of the constituent propositions, the problem of evil will no longer arise—though he admits that there may be other problems that may arise as a result. On the other hand, the fallacious solutions come in two forms. The first are those that begin by explicitly rejecting one of the constituent

⁴ Mackie, “Evil and Omnipotence,” 201-202.

propositions but later on implicitly or covertly reasserts it—Mackie also calls these solutions as the “unsatisfactory inconsistent solutions” or the “half-hearted solutions.” The second are those that begin by explicitly maintaining all the constituent propositions but later on implicitly or covertly reject at least one of them. Let us, in what follows, examine these two types of solutions more closely.

1. The Adequate Solutions and What They Imply

We can group the constituent propositions, as stated above, into two:

- a. the God propositions, referring to P1, P2, P4, and P5
- b. the Evil proposition, referring to P3

The adequate solutions for Mackie are thus those that deny either the Evil proposition or one of the God propositions. But what does it mean to deny either one of the God propositions and the evil proposition? Rejecting one of the God propositions would mean denying either that God is omnipotent, that God is wholly good, that God’s omnipotence is unlimited, or that God’s goodness is totally opposed to evil. In rejecting one of these propositions, however, we are in effect rejecting the existence of God. For a God that lacks any of the properties or capacities indicated in the God propositions is not really God. Now what about evil, what does it entail to reject its reality or existence? But first, what do we mean by “evil” here? How is the concept of evil understood in the context of the problem of evil?

Being the opposite of good, evil is simply defined as what good is not. Now assumed in the discussions on the problem of evil is the general understanding of good as desirability. Good is anything that is desirable; and based on this evil is accordingly anything that is undesirable. As Aquinas writes in the *Summa* (Question 48, Article 1): “...One opposite is [known](#) through the other, as darkness is [known](#) through light. Hence also what [evil](#) is must be [known](#) from the [nature](#) of [good](#). Now, we have said above that [good](#) is everything appetible...” But the concept of undesirability is too general. The definition given by Reichenbach in his book *Evil and a good God* (1982) is more specific and sheds more light on the concept of evil, and hence more preferable for our purposes. According to Reichenbach (1982, xi-xii), evil refers to “all instances of

pain and suffering—physical and mental—and all states of affairs significantly disadvantageous to an organism.” Reichenbach distinguishes between moral and natural evils: moral evil is the kind of evil that is intentionally and knowingly caused by humans (or the kind of evil for which humans are morally responsible); whereas natural evil is the kind of evil that is not intentionally and knowingly caused by humans (or the kind of evil for which humans are not morally responsible). Included in natural evil are: (1) all instances of evil unintentionally and unknowingly caused by humans, such as pains and sufferings accidentally inflicted by some humans on other humans; and (2) all instances of evil not caused by humans, such as pains and sufferings caused by natural calamities like earthquakes and tsunamis, and by animals such as mosquitoes, dogs, and snakes.

Given the foregoing definition of evil and its distinction into the moral and natural types, evil seems to be one of the undeniable phenomena in the world or, as it were, one of the brute facts of life. For denying the existence of evil is tantamount to denying the reality of our pains and sufferings. It is important to note, in this regard, that Aquinas’ and Augustine’s view that evil is the privation of the good is not intended to deny the reality of evil but to deny the substantiality or fundamentality of evil. Such a view is a position not on the existence but on the ontological type of evil. In this light, it would thus appear strange to regard the putative view as constituting an argument solving the problem of evil, which would run as follows: God created everything; evil is not a thing; therefore evil is not created by God. In saying that evil is not a thing one is not necessarily saying that evil is not real or does not exist. And even if we grant the non-existence of a substantial evil, the question remains: Why is there a non-substantial evil when there is a wholly good and omnipotent God?

In light of the undeniable reality of evil, Mackie’s adequate solutions to the problem of evil boil down to the denial of God’s existence. What is actually at stake in the incompatibility between the existence of God and existence of evil is the existence of God, not the existence of evil. The real challenge that the problem of evil poses is how to account for the existence of God given the reality of evil in the world. And this is the sense in which the problem of evil is a formidable challenge to the existence of God.

2. Mackie’s Analysis of the “Fallacious” Solutions

What Mackie regards as fallacious solutions to the problem of evil are solutions that come in the form of answers to the question of why it is necessary for evil to exist when there is a God who is wholly good and omnipotent. Mackie examines the following solutions, which come in the following form. Given that there is a God who is wholly good and infinitely omnipotent, evil still exists because:

1. Good cannot exist without evil, or evil is necessary as a counterpoint to good.
2. Evil is necessary as a means to good.
3. The universe is better with some evil in it that it could be if there were no evil.
4. Evil is due to human freewill.⁵

Generally, Mackie objects to these solutions by showing that these propositions cannot be consistently be maintained without rejecting at least one of the constituent propositions defining the problem of evil. Let us briefly examine the objections of Mackie to each of these proposed solutions. To begin with, the first claims that good cannot exist without evil, or evil is necessary as a counterpoint to good. This means that there has to be evil because good cannot exist, or perhaps cannot be identified, without its opposite, which is evil. Mackie has three objections to this. First, it contradicts either God's omnipotence or the unlimited nature of His omnipotence, for if God cannot create good without at the same time creating evil then He is not really powerful. Second, it contradicts God's total goodness which ought to eliminate evil as far as it can, for if God allows evil to be created as He creates good then He does not really desire to eliminate evil. And third, the amount of evil that the world contains is far too much to serve merely as a counterpoint to good. To serve as a counterpoint to good, one only needs a small amount of evil, as one only needs a speck of black color to recognize white color. The fact that there is evil in the world that is more than what (allegedly) is necessary to serve as a counterpoint to good, then God, again, is either not omnipotent or wholly good.

The second solution claims that evil is a necessary means to good. Mackie's simple objection to this is that this will make God subject to causal laws, which will severely restrict His power. Thus this solution contradicts either God's omnipotence or the unlimited nature of His omnipotence. The third solution

⁵ Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," 202-211.

claims that the universe is better with some evil in it than it could be if there were no evil. In simpler terms, this means that the amount of good that a universe containing evil has is greater than the amount of good that a universe not containing evil has. Mackie explains that this solution assumes that the existence of evil in a universe maximizes the amount of good in that universe by giving rise to nobler or higher-level goods. For instance, physical pains and misery give rise to heroism, sympathy, and benevolence. Without such evils these higher-order goods will not come about; so a universe that has these physical evils will have these higher-level goods while a universe not having these evils will not. It follows that the universe that has these evils is better, or has a greater amount of goods, than the one that does not have these evils.

Mackie objects to this solution in three ways. First, he claims that it will simply be absurd to think that God maintains certain evils in order to make possible certain higher-order goodness. Secondly, he claims that God, in this context, will neither be benevolent nor sympathetic since He will not be concerned to minimize evil but only to promote good. Thirdly, which Mackie claims to be the serious objection to this solution, is that as certain evils give rise to higher-order goods they also give rise to higher-order evils such as malevolence, cruelty, callousness, and cowardice. In this sense, there really is no guarantee that a universe that has some evils in it will be better than a universe that does not have them. Mackie, in these objections, does not particularly specify which of the constituent propositions defining the problem of evil that the solution being examined contradicts. We can, however, infer that his first and second objections to this solution point to a denial of God being wholly good, while the third points to a denial of God being omnipotent.

The fourth solution is particularly addressed to the problem of moral evil. It states that evil is not the creation of God but of humans in virtue of their freewill. Mackie raises two objections to this solution. First, "if God has made men such that in their free choices they sometimes prefer what is good and sometimes what is evil, why could he not have made men such that they always freely choose the good?"⁶ Mackie claims that there is no logical impossibility for humans to always freely choose the good, and since God does not make humans free in this way then either God is not really omnipotent or not wholly good. Secondly, Mackie argues that if men's wills are really free this must mean

⁶ Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," 209.

that even God cannot control them, which in turn means that there are limits to God's omnipotence.

II. Two Objections to Mackie's Analysis

I come now to my objections to Mackie's formulation. There are two related arguments that I will put forward. The first concerns Mackie's failure to consider the other attributes of God, such as His wisdom and sense of justice, that likewise influence how God relates to evil, or, more specifically, that likewise defines his divine exercise of omnipotence in relation to evil. The second concerns Mackie's confusion between what God chooses not to do and what God cannot do, or between God's omnipotence and God's divine exercise of omnipotence. To clearly demonstrate where my objections are coming from, let me give an illustration of the problem of evil as formulated by Mackie. Let us suppose that Mr. Cruz is an ideal teacher. Being so, he must surely possess, among others, the attributes of being benevolent and authoritative. Being benevolent, Mr. Cruz desires that all his students will pass all his classes. Being authoritative, he has the power to pass any or all his students in all his classes. But let us suppose that even with these two qualities, some of his students still fail some of his classes. This is I think is a reasonable possibility. If we combine this possibility with his two attributes, we have the following three propositions:

P1. Mr. Cruz is benevolent in that he desires that all his students to pass all his classes.

P2. Mr. Cruz is authoritative in that he has the power to pass any or all of his students.

P3. Some of his students fail in some his classes.

Does the conjunction of these three propositions result in a contradiction? Or can all these propositions be consistently held to be true? Let us suppose that a contradiction does result from it; and that it occurs in the following ways:

- a) If Mr. Cruz is both benevolent and authoritative, then none of his students should fail in any of his classes. (If P1 and P2 are both true, P3 must be false.)

- b) If Mr. Cruz is benevolent and some of his students fail in his courses, then Mr. Cruz is not really authoritative. (If P1 and P3 are both true, P2 must be false.)
- c) If Mr. Cruz is authoritative and some of his students fail in his classes then Mr. Cruz is not really benevolent. (If P2 and P3 are both true, then P1 must be false.)

But are these propositions really contradictory in the above-mentioned ways? They do not seem so. Surely, as earlier remarked, it is reasonably possible that they are all true at the same time; that Mr. Cruz is benevolent and authoritative and yet some of his students fail some his classes. But what gives rise to this possibility? It may be thought that it is the limited nature of Mr. Cruz's authority and benevolence. For even if he has the authority to pass all his students, but this authority is limited by some factors, say his judgment on whether a student deserves to pass his class or not can be changed or overridden by his coordinator or the school principal, then the fact that some of his students fail in some of his classes does not really contradict his being authoritative in passing his students. Another, his being benevolent may not be whole or complete in the sense that he is so all the time and without any discrimination (say he is more inclined to be benevolent to students who are economically poor). Given that he is benevolent only most of the time with special preference for certain students (such as the poor ones), then the fact that some of his students fail some of his classes does not contradict his being benevolent or his desire to pass all this students.

In this light, to ensure that a contradiction arises from the combination of the three propositions, we need to qualify the two propositions pertaining to Mr. Cruz's attributes (P1 and P2) with the following two propositions:

P4: Mr. Cruz is wholly benevolent in that he desires all his students all the time and without any discrimination to pass all his classes

P5: Mr. Cruz is fully authoritative in that his decision to pass a student cannot be overridden by any higher authority.

So now with the addition of these two propositions, can we now say or assert, without any doubt, that the conjunction of P1, P2, and P3, with P1 and P2 qualified respectively by P4 and P5 (or a simpler way of saying it, the conjunction of P1 to P5), will result in a contradiction? I believe that we still cannot. Why? The simple reason is that Mr. Cruz, being an ideal teacher, has other positive qualities that come into play in acting benevolently and in exercising his authority. For

instance, Mr. Cruz is presumably also fair in that he will pass a student only if this student deserves it. Another, Mr. Cruz is presumably also concerned with the quality of education that he imparts with his students. This means, among others, that he ensures that his examinations are quality ones in that they he will not make them too easy so that all his students will pass these examinations. Thus, if we assume that Mr. Cruz is wholly benevolent and fully authoritative in the above senses, still some of his students will fail some of his classes because Mr. Cruz is also fair and a quality educator.

In his formulation of the problem of evil, Mackie claims that if God is wholly good and infinitely omnipotent then God should eliminate evil completely. This is correct only if God is *only* wholly good and infinitely omnipotent. But God, as the perfect being, is much more than being wholly good and infinitely omnipotent. We say that God, being the perfect being, has all the desirable qualities there are; and so God must also be just and wise, among others. If God is just then He should punish evil persons and reward good persons appropriately. Since rewards are a kind of good, and punishments a kind of evil, if God completely eliminates evil then He will, in some cases, will be unjust. An unjust God is of course not God. Or, if we say that God is wise then we must assume that there must be some good reason for why He allows evil to occur, whatever that reason may be, and whether or not we can ever know that reason. If we believe that God is a perfect being, then we must also believe that there is wisdom in all He does, even if we sometimes cannot comprehend it or we personally cannot make sense of what is happening around us.

Mackie is correct that the existence of a wholly benevolent and infinitely omnipotent being is inconsistent with the occurrence of evil in this world; but he is incorrect if he equates such a being with God. For definitely, a perfect being is not limited to the possession of just these two attributes. Mackie's concept of God is definitely not that of the theists.

Let me now move on to my second point. Still, if Mr. Cruz does not pass a student it does not mean of course that he cannot or does not have the power to pass the student; nor does it mean that he does not desire the student to pass in his course. If Mr. Cruz, based on his fair and wise judgment, thinks that the student does not deserve to pass his course, then he ought to fail the student, though he desires the student to pass his course and it is within his power to give the student a passing mark.

When Mackie, in dealing with what he considers as fallacious solutions to the problem of evil, claims that (a) God is either not wholly good or infinitely omnipotent if He cannot create good without evil as a counterpoint, (b) cannot create good without making evil as means for attaining the good, (c) cannot create a better universe without some evil in it, and (d) cannot create humans free without these humans always freely choosing the good, Mackie is confusing what God does not do, or decides (or chooses) not to do, with what God cannot do.

If God creates good with making evil as means for attaining the good, it does not mean that God cannot create good without making evil as means for attaining the good. God simply chooses to create good in that way. If God creates a universe with some evil in it, it does mean that He cannot create a universe without some evil in it. God simply chooses to create a universe in that way. If God creates a world in which humans are not always freely choosing the good, it does not mean He cannot create a world in which humans are always freely choosing the good. He simply chooses to create the world we have today, in which humans are not always freely choosing the good.⁷ Now, why would

⁷ Plantinga (1974, 44), in response to Mackie, claims that for God to create humans free and to ensure that they will always do the good things is a contradiction (for then God would have to determine human actions); and it is not within God's power to do that [or to bring about impossible states of affairs, as Hoffman and Rosenkrantz (2013, 243-250) put it]. Mackie's point, however, is not for God to determine human actions so that humans will always freely choose to do what is good; but for God to create humans who, on their own (that is, without God's intervention), will always freely choose to do what is good. The point of Mackie is that if God is all-powerful, then it should be within His power to create such kind of humans. In this light, Plantinga's free will defense will not work, for it would not then be a case of God bringing about something contradictory or impossible. But even granting this, Mackie's argument still does not work. Mackie's point is that God's inability to create such kind of humans is a point against God's omnipotence. We argue, against Mackie, that it isn't really God's inability but God's choice or decision. God not creating such kind of humans is not due to the fact that God does not have the power to do so but that God simply chooses not to do so. Surely, it would be replied, in defense of Mackie, that if such were the case, then God wouldn't really be all-good, because it was within His power to create such kind of humans but He decided not to do so. So now, it is a point against God's omnibenevolence, that God is not wholly good after all. But again, our reply here is that

God choose to create those things, and not the other way round? Perhaps the better question is, are these things which God does inconsistent with (or do not benefit) his Godly nature? What will be our standards to say this?

Some may think we are back to the old question raised by Socrates: Is something good because God wills it or God wills it because it is good? In the former, God's will determines what is good; in the latter, a higher standard of goodness determines God's will. On closer inspection, this question is not really a question of which is a higher standard, God's will or the good. This is really a question of whether the God that one believes in is the true God. In this case, which God is the true God, the God whose will defines what is good or the God who follows a higher standard of goodness? It may be asked, what if God reverses all His commandments, would these reverse commandments still be good? I think the analysis should be that if God does that then he is actually not God.

What God does not do He chooses not to do, not because He cannot do it or does not have the power to do it. There is a big difference, to use an analogy, between a blind man not seeing a picture and a man with normal eyesight likewise not seeing the same picture because of deliberately not looking at the picture. In the case of the blind man, he does not see the picture because he cannot see it; but in the case of the man with normal eyesight he does not see the picture because for some reason he chooses not to look at it. In the same way, if God does not eliminate some form of evil, it does not mean He does not desire to eliminate it or He does not have the power to eliminate it; it can only mean that God has decided not to eliminate it based on His wisdom or divine judgment.

But perhaps one may reply that all the other attributes of God, such as being wise, fair, and compassionate, are all included in His being wholly good. If this is the case, then in being wholly good, God would not necessarily desire to completely eliminate evil, as this may run counter to His being just, among

it either reduces the goodness of God simply to the desire to eliminate evil or it assumes that God's goodness (understood as desire to eliminate evil) is the only attribute of God that is at play when deciding on how to exercise His omnipotence. God, being a perfect being, must surely have other attributes, such as justice and compassion, among others, which likewise influence how He exercises His omnipotence.

the other attributes that comprise His goodness. And in this case, we do not really have a problem of evil.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is true that if God is wholly good then He should desire to eliminate evil or prevent it from occurring, but not if evil is necessary for God to exercise or assert His other divine attributes such as being just and wise. It is likewise true that God is infinitely omnipotent, but it is up to God, according to His own wisdom and godly nature, how He will exercise this power. The problem of evil only arises if one limits God's divine nature to being wholly good and all-powerful (or if one limits His being good to eliminating evil). But a God who is not also just, compassionate, or wise is not the God that theists believe in. Thus, the problem of evil is not really a threat to theism. Lastly, if there are things about God that we cannot seem to reconcile with certain occurrences in the world, I do not think it is necessarily attributable to some limitations of God (which make His existence questionable). For it may very well be due to our own limitations—the limitations of our own understanding or cognitive capacities, and perhaps also of our own logic.

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