1 🔳 **The Problem of Evil**
(What is Evil?)
- Module: Philosophy
- Lesson 15

2 🔳 **Some Recommended Sources On Evil**
- Grand Central Question, by Abdu Murray
- "The Problem of Evil," by Ronald Nash, in To Everyone an Answer. ed. by Beckwith, Craig, & Moreland
- "Questions about Evil," in When Skeptics Ask, by Norman Geisler and Ronald Brooks
- God, Freedom, and Evil, by Alvin Plantinga
- "What About Suffering," in On Guard, by William Lane Craig
- "Evil," in Stealing from God, by Frank Turek
- "Did God Create Evil", Mike Winger vlog, at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GSToZ_4yh54
- "As Sparks Fly Upward," paper by Rick Harvey (http://www.persuasivefaith.org/resources/Papers/SparksFlyUpward.pdf)

3 🔳 **The Problem of Evil**
- The problem of evil is considered by most Christian apologists to be Christianity's greatest challenge.
- In fact, every worldview must provide an intellectually and experientially satisfying answer to this problem.
- Evil and suffering can be seen as an argument for the Christian view of God.

4 🔳 **Two Kinds of Evil**
- Moral evil: the doing of wrong by people
- Natural evil: things like disease, natural catastrophe, etc.

5 🔳 **Two Distinct (but related) Problems**
- The logical (intellectual) problem.
- The experiential (emotional) problem.
- We need to learn how to deal with each problem appropriately. (Two distinct problems call for two distinct "apologetics".)

6 🔳 **What Is Evil?**
- People typically know evil when they see it, but might be hard put to define exactly what it is.
  - Illus: Justice Potter Stewart's famous quote re: defining pornography: "I know it when I see it."(1964)

7 🔳 **What Is Evil?**
- The atheist's answer:
- It appears the most logical atheist answer would be that there is no real objective evil, it's just the way things are, it is simply the functioning of the laws of nature.

- Problem: No one can really live this way consistently, as though evil doesn't exist.
  - Everyone has an instinctive sense that some things or actions/non-actions are inherently evil.
- Most atheists avoid this dilemma by merely asserting the existence of evil.
  - Without an objective measure of good and evil, moral evil is that which a person, culture, or society deems to be evil.
  - Problem: Such a human-based measure of evil is relativistic and incurs all the liabilities of such a relativistic view of evil.

8 🟦 What Is Evil?

- The dualist's answer:
- (note: we're using the word "dualist" in a different context here than last week):
- There is a good god (or force) and an evil god (or force), typically of relatively equal power or stature.
- Evil emanates from the evil god (or force).
  - Illus: Star Wars
- Problem: there is no objective measure whereby to know which god (or force) is which. Which is good and which is evil (relativism)?
- Note that in Star Wars we instinctively side with those on the light side (they are portrayed as the protagonists), yet without any real objective justification in the story for why that would be preferable to the "Dark Side of the Force."

9 🟦 What Is Evil?

- The pantheist's answer:
- Evil and suffering are merely an illusion. Once we're fully enlightened we will no longer experience evil or suffering.
- Problem: This leaves people with hopelessness, and is a disincentive to addressing evil.
- Problem: If evil is an illusion, so also is good. If there really is no evil, neither is there such a thing a good.

10 🟦 What is Evil? A Christian Answer

- Proper definitions are crucial to avoid serious challenges to the Christian faith.
- A faulty definition of evil leads to erroneous conclusions about God.
  - Example:
    - God is the creator of everything.
    - Evil is a something.
    - Therefore, God created evil.

11 🟦 What Evil is Not

- Evil is not an illusion (it is real).
- Evil is not a force or other "god or being." (e.g. Star Wars' "Dark Side")
- Evil is not some thing or object or "stuff".

12 ◻ Evil Is—

- The privation or absence of good. (The absence or deprivation of a good that ought to exist.)
  - Illus: Blindness in a person. (The absence of sight.)
  - Illus: To know the right thing to do and not to do it is sin. (The sin of omission.) (James 4:17)
- OR
- Otherwise good things in an improper relationship with each other. (Improper: not according to created or natural purpose.)
  - Illus: Water in the human lung (causes suffocation).
  - Illus: Adultery (sexual intimacy outside the created purpose.)

13 ◻ Evil Is—

- In each aspect of this definition, evil is what is called a "state of affairs."
- A state of affairs:
  - A situation, or a set of circumstances.
  - "The way things are." -Alvin Plantinga-
  - Illus: All of us being in this room, with the furnishings, arranged in this particular way, and holding a class, is a state of affairs. It is not a thing or object, an impersonal force, or an illusion.
- Evil, then, is not a thing, a being or force, or an illusion, but a state of affairs in which there is a privation or absence of good or good things are in an improper relationship to each other.

14 ◻ Did God Create Evil?

- Consider our earlier syllogism.
  - Premise 1: God is the creator of all things.
  - Premise 2: Evil is a thing.
  - Therefore, God created evil.
- Premise 2 is false. Evil is not a "thing," but rather a state of affairs. Therefore the conclusion is unsupported and the argument fails.

15 ◻ Did God Create Evil?

- Can it still be argued that God created evil?
- Consider another syllogism.

- Premise 1: God created all reality.
- Premise 2: Evil is a real state of affairs.
- Therefore, God created evil.
- Premise 1 is false. As we shall see, not everything that is real can be said to have been created. (e.g. God is real, yet he is was not created.)
- The conclusion, therefore, is unsupported.

16 🟦 Did God Create Evil?

- Creating vs. Actualizing.
  - Material things, forces, and beings other than God are created (ex nihilo, out of nothing, or made from other things).
  - However, a state of affairs, as a circumstance or the way things stand in relationship to each other, is not created, per se, but we say it is actualized.
- We can establish that God did not actualize all states of affairs.
  - Example: The state of affairs of God's existing.
  - Example: Imagine the state of affairs of Adam and Eve on a picnic. This would be a state of affairs which they, not God, actualized. (We can say that they were the "efficient cause.")
- God did not create evil, nor, according to Scripture, did he actualize evil.

17 🟦 What About Isaiah 45:7?

- "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things." (KJV)
  - Skeptics sometimes cite this verse to claim that the bible says God created [moral] evil.
  - The word translated "evil" here in the King James Version is the Hebrew word ra. In its semantic range (various ways it is used) it can refer to moral evil, but also in numerous places refers to things like disaster, calamity, misery, injury, harm, ruin, misfortune, etc. (Isa. 31:2; Jer. 7:6; Amos 6:3; Hos. 2:9; Ps. 94:13, etc. etc.)

18 🟦 What About Isaiah 45:7?

- In the context in Isaiah 45:7 ra is contrasted with shalom (peace), so it has the connotation not of moral evil, but of that which contrasts with peace (e.g. calamity, disaster, trouble, etc.) Most modern translations translate it accordingly. (i.e. ESV, NASB, NIV, NRSV, NLT, CSB, NET)
- At the time the King James was translated, the word evil tended to have a wider semantic range in common usage than it does today, which included the idea of calamity, disaster, etc. Hence, given the context, even the KJV does not imply moral evil by its use of the word evil.
- God is repeatedly shown in scripture to bring about calamity, disaster, trouble, etc. for the purposes of accomplishing a greater good. (The flood, the plagues on Egypt, Israel's defeat and captivity, etc. etc.)

19 🟦 So, Where are We?

- We have argued that evil is not an illusion, but is very real.
- We have argued that evil is not an object, thing, or force (or being).
- We have argued that things are created, but since evil is not a thing it confuses the issue to speak of it as having been created.
    - Therefore, it is incorrect to say it was created by God.
- We have argued that evil is a state of affairs, and that God did not (does not) actualize all states of affairs.
    - Christians believe that Adam and Eve actualized the state of affairs of human evil.
    - Therefore, it is incorrect to argue that God actualized the state of affairs of evil.

20 ▢ And Yet…

- It can still be argued…
    - …that evil would not exist had God not created the world.
    - …that God, if he exists as an omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good being, would not have created a world with the possibility of evil, nor would he allow evil to exist. Since evil exists, such a God clearly does not.
- This is what is referred to as the logical problem of evil.

21 ▢ The Logical Problem of Evil: Two Versions

- The Deductive Version: Given the existence of evil, it is logically impossible that God exists.
- The Inductive Version: Given the existence of evil, it is highly improbable that God exists.

22 ▢ Next Week

- The Logical Problem of Evil