



## **Pike on Evil**

**PHIL 320**  
**Philosophy of Religion**  
**Spring 2008**



**“The universe is better  
with some evil in it could  
be if there were no evil”**

- **Aesthetic analogy**
- **Progress**
- **Physical evil (1<sup>st</sup> order)**
- **2<sup>nd</sup> order good and evil**
- **Only derivative value to 2<sup>nd</sup> order good**
- **God only concerned to promote good**
- **Problem of 2<sup>nd</sup> order evil**



**“Evil is due to  
human freewill”**

- **Incoherence of freewill?**
- **Humans always freely choose good?**
- **Freewill as random**
- **Paradox of omnipotence**



**Nelson Pike**

- **Ph.D. Harvard 1963**
- **“Hume on Evil” *Mind* 1963**
- **U.C. Irvine**
- **Impact on me**
- **Impact on Colleen**
- **Viet Nam war**
- **Contribution to the problem of evil**

## **“Hume on Evil”**



- **Expert on Hume**
- **Centrality of Hume’s *Dialogues* in discussion of the problem of evil**
- **Just as focused on contemporary discussions**
- **Impact of the argument is on contemporary treatments**

## **Philo’s First Position**



- **Organizational structure**
- **Making that structure clear**
- **First position**
  - **Philo’s argument is logical**
  - **Inconsistent triad as the logical structure**
- **Demea’s theodicy**
- **Philo’s second position**

## **1st Position**



- **Inconsistent triad**
  - **The world contains instances of suffering**
  - **God exists – and is omnipotent and omniscient**
  - **God exists – and is perfectly good**
- **Argument is deficient**
- **Rejection of Mackie’s quasi-logical rule**

## **Morally Sufficient Reasons**



- **New jargon from Pike**
- **Parent and medicine**
- **Surgeon example**
- **All these examples are from the perspective of limited human actions**
- **Could God have a morally sufficient reason?**

## Restatement of the Triad



- The world contains instances of suffering
- God exists – and is omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good
- An omnipotent and omniscient being would have no morally sufficient reason for allowing instances of suffering
- “Logically tight”
- Since 4 is obvious, Philo needs the truth of 6 to show the falsity of 5

## Could God have a morally sufficient reason?



- Atheist says no, but how to show this?
- Failure of the “inductive” strategy
- 6 must be a necessary truth
- 5 potential morally sufficient reasons
- None of these could apply to God
- Does excuse *entail* limitation?

## Demea’s Theodicy



- Hume’s statement
- St Thomas Aquinas
- Pike’s blocks
- Is this theodicy possible?
- No argument that it is impossible
- Mere possibility is sufficient to show that the evil is not a logical problem for theism

## Philo’s second position



- Philo’s retirement
- Pike’s analysis of Hume
- Teleological argument as evidence for theism
- Considering all of the evidence
- Evil as countervailing evidence
- Evil as evidence against theism
- Limited application?
- “noncrucial perplexity of relatively minor importance”