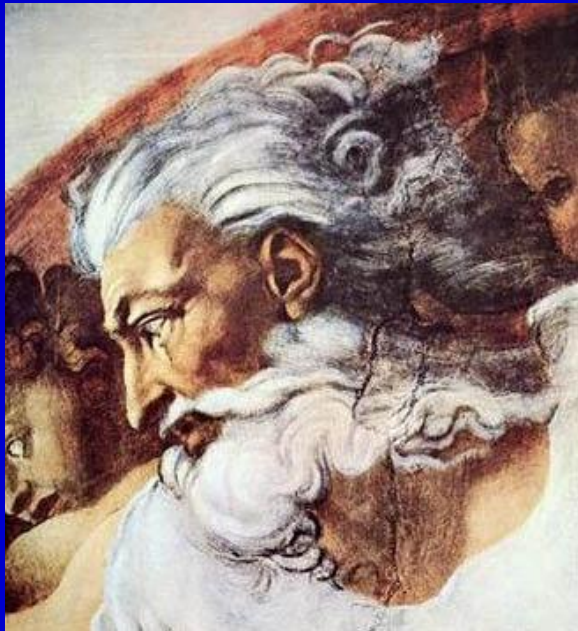




PHIL 101

Winter 2007



Self, World,

& God

Self, World, & God

PROBLEMS

- Practical problems
- Intellectual problems
 - Scientific
 - Philosophical
 - Theological
- Theoretical problems
- Logical problems
- Evidential problems

Problem of Evil

His power, we allow, is infinite; whatever he wills is executed; but neither man nor any animal is happy; therefore he does not will their happiness. His wisdom is infinite; he is never mistaken in choosing the means to any end; but the course of nature tends not to human or animal felicity; therefore it is not established for that purpose. Through the whole compass of human knowledge there are no inferences more certain than these. In what respect, then, do his benevolence and mercy resemble the benevolence and mercy of men? [Hume, 259-60]

Epicurus' Old Questions

- Is he willing to prevent evil, but not able?
- . . . then he is impotent.
- Is he able, but not willing?
- . . . then he is malevolent.
- Is he both able and willing?
- . . . whence then is evil?
- Hume's unstated answer:
- Evil is incompatible with omnipotence and moral perfection.

DEFINITIONS

- Evil
 - Pain
 - 2nd order goods and evils – moral characteristics like charity, courage, selfishness and cowardice
 - Moral evil – human caused pain
 - Natural evil – pain from natural world
- God
 - Omnipotent
 - Personal and morally perfect

J. L. Mackie's Challenge

[R]eligious beliefs . . . Are positively irrational, . . . the several parts of the essential theological doctrine are inconsistent with one another. . . . [Theists] must be prepared to believe, not merely what cannot be proved, but what can be *disproved* from other beliefs that [they] also hold.

. . . In it's simplest form the problem is this: God is omnipotent, God is wholly good; and yet evil exists. There seems to be some contradiction between these three propositions, so that if any two of them were true the third would be false. . . . [A]ll three are essential parts of most theological positions; the theologian, it seems, at once *must* adhere and *cannot consistently* adhere to all three.

INCONSISTENT TRIADS

- Sarah is not an only child.
- Sarah does not have a brother.
- Sarah does not have a sister.
- What's odd about these sentences?
- Any two can be true together.
- But not all three.
- No fair playing games with language!
- Logical contradiction

MACKIE'S CHARGE

- Traditional theism embodies an inconsistent triad:
- God is omnipotent
- God is morally perfect (wholly good)
- Evil exists
- Hume and Epicurus
- Are these really incompatible?
- Mackie's quasi-logical rules

QUASI-LOGICAL RULES

- Made up technical jargon
- Analysis of what's going on in the problem of evil
- R_1 : Good (moral perfection] is opposed to evil in such a way that a good thing always eliminates evil as far as it can.
- R_2 : There are no limits to what an omnipotent thing can do.
- Mackie concedes logical limits

NELSON PIKE'S CRITIQUE

- Concept of the inconsistent triad
- Need to modify R_2
- Morally sufficient reasons
- More made up jargon
- Example of the good parent
- Example of the good surgeon
- Revised R_2 :
- Good (moral perfection) is opposed to evil in such a way that a good thing always eliminates any evil it can which is not logically required for some greater good

THE ALLIGATION

- Theism is irrational
- Theism is inconsistent
- Theism's inconsistent triad:
 - God is omnipotent
 - God is morally perfect
 - Evil exists
- How can we show on the basis of Mackie's and Pike's analysis that this is not a real inconsistent triad?

LOGICAL CONTRADICTIONS

- Can't solve contradictions by adding more
- Start with genuinely inconsistent triad
- Sarah is not an only child.
- Sarah does not have a brother.
- Sarah does not have a sister
- Add something new
- Sarah has a “special” kind of sibling
- Still a contradiction

DOES THEISM EMBODY AN INCONSISTENT TRIAD?

- God is omnipotent
- God is morally perfect
- Evil exists
- Theist can add the following:
- God has a morally sufficient reason for evil
- The “quadrad” no longer seems inconsistent

Possible Skeptical Responses

- Deny that morally sufficient reasons can apply to God (still a contradiction)
- Challenge theists to supply a morally sufficient reason.
 - If they can't, assume that one doesn't exist.
 - But, theists have supplied candidates
 - Even if all candidates are inadequate, mere possibility of a morally sufficient reason proves no inconsistency in theism.
- Use evil, not as “proof” of God's non-existence, but as **EVIDENCE**