

# Oklahoma Tornadoes: Where was God?

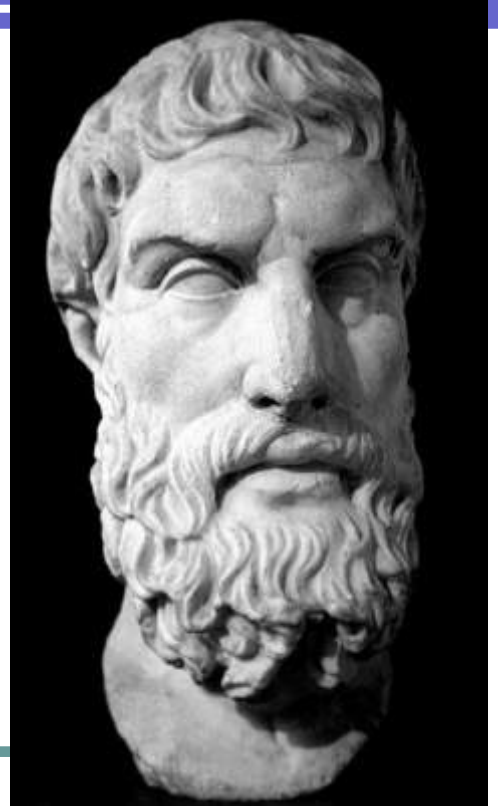
- By Dave Sterrett, Published: May 21, 2013 at 11:34 am
- In moments of severe disasters like the tornado in Oklahoma, people of faith will often speak of “praying for the city” or “praying for the victims.” As the massive tornado outside of Oklahoma City annihilated buildings including a school with students and teachers, some people of faith used social media to speak messages of prayer and hope in God. However, some atheists also posted in social media, referred to this natural disaster as a “gratuitous evil” or evidence against God’s existence. One atheist tweeted:
- **“NEWSFLASH—If god cared about Oklahoma he wouldn’t have allowed the tornado in the first place. #PrayForOklahoma #Atheism**
- <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/on-faith/wp/2013/05/21/if-god-cared-why-would-he-have-allowed-the-tornadoes/>



# The Problem of Evil

# Epicurus

- Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is not omnipotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Then whence cometh evil? Is he neither able nor willing? Then why call him God?



# The Problem of Evil

- **Moral evil**
- **Natural evil**
- **Intellectual problem**
- **Emotional problem**
- **Defense**
- **Theodicy**

# The Argument

- 1 If God exists then he is omnipotent and omnibenevolent
- 2 If God is omnipotent, then he can create any world that he desires
- 3 If God is omnibenevolent, then he prefers a world without evil over a world with evil
- 4 Evil exists
- \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 God does not exist

# Is God omnipotent?

- **Romans 1:20** For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,
- **Jeremiah 32:26** Then the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, saying,**27** “Behold, I *am* the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?

# Is God omnipotent?

- Daniel 4:34 For His dominion *is* an everlasting dominion,  
And His kingdom *is* from generation to generation.  
**35** All the inhabitants of the earth *are* reputed as nothing;  
He does according to His will in the army of heaven  
And *among* the inhabitants of the earth.  
No one can restrain His hand  
Or say to Him, “What have You done?”

# Is God omnibenevolent?

- **Exodus 33:19** Then He said, “I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”



# Is God omnibenevolent?

- **James 1:17** Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

# The Argument

- If God exists then he is omnipotent and omnibenevolent
- **If God is omnipotent, then he can create any world that he desires**
- If God is omnibenevolent, then he prefers a world without evil over a world with evil
- Evil exists
- \_\_\_\_\_
- God does not exist

If God is omnipotent, then he can create any world that he desires.

- Are there things that God cannot do?
- **Hebrews 6:17** Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath, **18** that by two immutable things, in which it *is* impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before *us*.

# Are there things that God cannot do?

- Create a square circle.
- Will to both exist and not exist.
- Create a universe in which there is Free Will but no evil
- Free Will Defense
- Pat Answer #1: You do not understand the Omnipotence of God

# Things God Cannot Do

- "It is possible that God, even being omnipotent, could not create a world with free creatures who never choose evil. Furthermore, it is possible that God, even being omnibenevolent, would desire to create a world which contains evil if moral goodness requires free moral creatures."
- -Alvin Plantinga



# The Argument

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- If God is omnipotent, then he can create any world that he desires
- **If God is omnibenevolent, then he prefers a world without evil over a world with evil**
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- \_\_\_\_\_
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If God is omnibenevolent, then he prefers a world without evil over a world with evil.

- Evil vs Bad
- Parents and Children
- **Hebrews 12: 5** And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons:
- “My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; **6** For whom the Lord loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.”

# Discipline

- **7** If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? **8** But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. **9** Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected *us*, and we paid *them* respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? **10** For they indeed for a few days chastened *us* as seemed *best* to them, but He for *our* profit, that *we* may be partakers of His holiness. **11** Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.



# Allowing the bad so that good will result

- “Bad” does not always equal “evil”
- Medicine
- Caution: God does not cause bad things to happen but can use them to our benefit.

# Allowing the bad so that good will result

- **James 1:2** My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,**3** knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.**4** But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

# Allowing the bad so that good will result

- **James 1:12** Blessed *is* the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. **13** Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. **14** But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. **15** Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

# Allowing the bad so that good will result

- Admission that we have a limited view
- (Skeptical Theism)
- Isaiah 55:8 “For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, Nor *are* your ways My ways,” says the Lord.  
9 “For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth,  
So are My ways higher than your ways,  
And My thoughts than your thoughts.

# Limited View

- **1 Cor. 13:11** When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. **12** For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

# Natural Evil

- Just as God could not create a world where there is Free Will but no Evil,
- God cannot create a world where there is life **and** mortality and no natural law.

# Theodicy

- The Christian Theist should expect evil in the world.
- Purpose of life is not happiness but the knowledge of God
- **Ecclesiastes 12:13** Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter:
  - Fear God and keep His commandments,  
For this is man's all.  
**14** For God will bring every work into judgment,  
Including every secret thing,  
Whether good or evil.

# Theodicy – we should expect evil

- Mankind is in rebellion to God
- **Romans 1:24** Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, **25** who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. ....
- **28** And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting;



# Theodicy

- God's purpose is not restricted to this life
- **2 Cor. 4:16** Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward *man* is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. **17** For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory, **18** while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which *are* not seen are eternal.

# Evil as a proof for the existence of God

- **Axiological argument**
  - If God did not exist, then objective moral values would not exist.
  - Evil exists
  - Therefore, objective moral values exist
  - Therefore, God exists.

# Theodicy

- Natural evil is also the consequence of the choice man made.
- Man is mortal because man disobeyed God
- Sin is not inherited but the consequences are
- God is all powerful and all caring but is also perfectly just

# Theodicy

Gen. 15:15 Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. 16 But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.”

Joshua 24:8

# Theodicy

Deut. 9:4 “Do not think in your heart, after the Lord your God has cast them out before you, saying, ‘Because of my righteousness the Lord has brought me in to possess this land’; but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord is driving them out from before you.

# Romans 9

14 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! 15 For He says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.”[f] 16 So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. 17 For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.”[g] 18 Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.

# Romans 9

19 You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?” 20 But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, “Why have you made me like this?” 21 Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

# Romans 9

22 What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, 23 and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, 24 even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?



# Theodicy – Romans 5

- **12** Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned— **13** (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. **14** Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

# Theodicy – Romans 5

- **15** But the free gift *is* not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. **16** And the gift *is* not like *that which* came through the one who sinned. For the judgment *which* came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift *which* came from many offenses resulted in justification.

# Theodicy – Romans 5

- **17** For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.)
- **18** Therefore, as through one man's offense *judgment came* to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act *the free gift came* to all men, resulting in justification of life. **19** For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.

# Emotional Problem

- We need to separate the intellectual problem from the emotional problem
- Grief is not the time for philosophy.

# Further Study

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- Internal vs. External problem
- The Logical vs. the probabilistic versions