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PHIL 361: “The Problem of Evil” Reflection

“The Problem of Evil” class introduced many new beliefs and views related to evil that I had not previously given much thought. The main concepts introduced were related to the logical problem of evil and the evidential problem of evil. The logical problem of evil focuses on the idea that a wholly good and powerful God is logically incompatible with evil, evil exists, therefore God doesn’t exist. However, I enjoyed studying about Rowe’s G.E. Moore Shift of the evidential problem. The focus of the G.E. Moore shift defends belief in God with the coexistence of evil. I believe that there is evil in the world, however, God has his reasonings that myself, as a Christian, may not be aware of or may not understand.

One of the most meaningful topics I have studied would be Plantiga’s Free Will defense for the logical problem of evil. It focused on the idea that evil results from the misuse of free will in which it is better to have a free world with evil than no free will at all. God could not just create any world He wanted and guarantee that freedom would always be used for good. If He had, then we, as individuals, would not actually have free will. Furthermore, I think that free will can lead to good things, even if evil helps to get there, because there may be a good state of affairs that cannot occur without evil. C.S. Lewis spoke about this in his book *The Problem of Pain* (Lewis, 1996). He claimed that with human freedom, individuals are able to choose or deny what desires to act upon to live up to what or who they want to be. Therefore, there is a possibility to do the wrong thing because of free will and desires that are contrary to what I, as a Christian, know is right. Lewis also explains that God pays us an intolerable compliment of loving us. This means that God will not leave us as we are but will trouble us into who we are supposed to be. Without evil or suffering, individuals will not naturally surrender to God, therefore, evil is a way to bring individuals closer to God. Another interesting piece of work studied this semester would be *The Great Divorce.* I found it interesting how people in hell would not want to go to heaven and their good has just been twisted. Furthermore, people that are in hell may have something that they can’t or don’t want to get rid of. I found this book meaningful because it focused on many aspects we have studied and how good has been twisted and how evil and hell are chosen, which I think related back to the concept of free will. I found it surprising that there are so many different beliefs and ways to look at the reasons for evil and reasons that God does the things He does. For example, in *A Grotesque in the Garden*, we are introduced to two characters, Naphil and Tesque, who view things in opposite ways. Naphil has a negative outlook on God and fails to follow the commandment of loving others as yourself. Whereas, Tesque has trouble with loving God because he believes that God is silent when people need Him the most. I think this is important because it is the way many people in today’s society view God when they suffer from some form of evil. This reading changed my thinking on the topic of divine silence. I never really viewed God as being silent, however, after this reading, the character of Tesque made me realize how individuals who endure suffering might respond and why they may think that God is not there, or is silent, in their times of pain.

This course did not make me reexamine my belief in God with the coexistence of evil, rather, it strengthened my belief in God. In the future, I will have specific pieces of work to reference to help answer questions that involve the coexistence of evils and God. This course introduced me to many new concepts I previously was unaware of and made me want to read more and research more about concepts relating to salvation, natural versus moral evils, and different responses to the problem of evil that is evident in our society today.

References

Lewis, C. (1996). The Problem of Pain. HarperCollins Publishers.