

Why god allows evil

[Religion](#), [God](#)



Why God Allows Evil Swinburne defends the view that the existence of evil in the world is consistent with the existence of an omnipotent, perfectly good God. Not only are they consistent, he argues, but the amount of good in the world requires the possibility of substantial evil. He begins his argument by distinguishing moral evil (which comes from humans acting in morally bad ways) from natural evil (pain and suffering that comes from anything other than human action with predictable outcome), both of which are necessary for the world's good. To understand why moral evil is necessary, Swinburne asks us to consider what sorts of goods a generous god would give to humans. In addition to pleasure and contentment, he suggests that such a god would " give us great responsibility for ourselves, each other, and the world, and thus a share in his own creative activity of determining what sort of world it is to be." This kind of responsibility requires that humans have free will, for we are not responsible for our actions absent the freedom to choose other actions. Moreover, it is incompatible with God's intervention when humans commit bad acts. That is, to have genuine responsibility for something, one must have the opportunity to harm that thing as well as benefit it. Further, he argues that humans must have some inherent inclination to act badly in order for us to have a real choice between doing good and doing evil. If we only had an inclination to act rightly, then doing so would be a foregone conclusion. Thus, in order to make the choice between good actions and evil actions meaningful, Swinburne argues that God would have made humans inclined to act wrongly in order to facilitate the responsibility necessary for a good life. Swinburne accounts for the presence of natural evil in much the same way. On his account natural evil provides

opportunity for humans to have the complex responsibility necessary for good lives. It does so in two ways. First, the natural processes that result in evil allow humans to either exploit them to harm others (a moral evil) or fight them to do good. For example, humans can learn about diseases to help spread disease or fight it. Second, the existence of natural evils gives humans the opportunity to act in morally significant ways. Pain, for example, allows one to thrive in the face of adversity or to help others in need. Thus, according to Swinburne, both moral and natural evil bear upon human responsibility, which is itself necessary for human good. Since an omnipotent and benevolent god would provide the best possible life for humans, Swinburne believes that such a good would allow for evil.