

Either god exists or
he doesn't. there is
no middl essay



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God's ground, and any attempt to remain neutral in relation to God's existence is automatically synonymous with unbelief. It is far from a "moot" question, because if God does exist, then nothing else really matters; if He does not exist, then nothing really matters at all. This is kind of unfortunate for someone like myself, because I've always lived on that nonexistent middle ground. Until now I've never been put in a position where it was questioned. The last couple of years I've referred to myself as a recovering Catholic, but never redefined my religion (or lack thereof) since then. When I found out I had to take a stand in this paper one way or another, yes or no, black or white, it was unsettling. At that point it became more than a term paper. Can I, with a clear conscience, write a 15 page paper denouncing the existence of God? I kind of cringed as I imagined being struck down Indiana Jones style, and in that, I had my answer. So without further adieu, the next 15 pages is me, making my case (I think) for the existence of God. What better place to start, than Pascal's Wager.

Pascal's Wager takes this angle: You must wager. There is no choice, he says, you are already committed. I liked the example he used of the toss of the coin, he wants us to see this choice as the gamble that it is. Before you put your money on either, examine the odds, says Pascal: One on side of the coin, heads: God exists and there is an eternal heaven to be gained and an eternal Hell to be avoided. On the flip-side of the coin: God does not exist, no heaven and hell to look forward to or fear, no rewards and no wrath. Choose God, says Pascal, If you win you win everything if you lose you lose nothing, though the odds are even, the rewards are not. Choose heads and win, and in the words of Willy Wonka, you win the "grand and glorious jackpot."

Is this true? Is it wrong for me to take a theist's approach to this paper, and yet still disagree with Pascal's logic? Pascal says there is a full and happy life to be won, but isn't there also a full and happy life to be lost, depending on your ideas of full and happy? What if from here on you choose to follow the ways of God, walk the straight and narrow, you're missing out on a really good time! Let's face it, sinning is fun, and whether you've simply lived it, or continue to live by it, you have to agree. I still see Pascal's wager as relevant in it's own respects..... but I can't suppress argument. In other words, if a coin falls in a forest and your dead, will you see if it's heads or tails? Not if it's tails you won't, but that doesn't mean it's not still tails.

Pascal takes the stand that God's existence cannot be proven. One might wonder why it is necessary to present evidence for the existence of God. The belief in some higher presence, other than our own, has existed since man can recollect. Religion was established from this belief, and it will survive and flourish because of this belief. Pascal takes the position that the existence of a God cannot be proven because, in a sentence, ' we cannot comprehend the infinite.' It cannot be resolved rationally because God is ultimately beyond our comprehension, the very believing in God is an act free of reasoning — reason can't be used to choose either, because neither can be proved. I have to agree, assuming God exists, he hasn't yet jumped out from behind the sofa yelling " Here I am! Here I am!" and Even if he did, I wouldn't be the first one to say, " Oohhhhhh, so THAT's the infinite...." I think I'd still have some questions. (the first: what are you doing behind my couch?)

Pascal's Wager gave way to two major objections. The first objection is what we call the Many Religions Objection, which asks this: there are thousands of religions out there, if we are to be active members of the religious community and participate..... clearly we must choose one, but how do we know if our religion is the right one? Pascal might have told you that even a stab in the dark is better than nothing. If there's a bomb about to go off , you're a whole lot better off just picking a wire and cutting it, than just standing there and waiting for Macgiver.

The second objection is referred to as the Hypocrisy Objection, which asks this: will pretend prudential belief really get you into heaven? Does it really count? I guess that depends. If you're the guy who shows up to church with a discman, and you only shut it off for the wine and cracker.... then probably not. Can prudential belief really turn genuine? I guess that's not for me to decide, but it's basis of Pascal's response that it can. Pascal says that participation in religion will convert prudential belief into genuine faith. It's his view that the prayer and fellowship and new carpet fumes will make you see the light. " That will make you believe quite naturally, and will make you more docile." Docile?? The same docile that's in my dictionary? Submissive and easily managed? Is that what religion is all about? Regardless, that's where the objection lies. Although Pascal's wager seems convincing at first glance, is it really convincing enough to create genuine belief where before there was none?

Clifford doesn't think so. Clifford uses an example about an owner of an emigrant-ship. He knew his ship was old and had seen better days, and although his buddies told him it was time to have her checked out, he
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pushes his doubts aside. After all, his ship had made it this long, what's one more trip? (plus he was a tight wad, and didn't want to spend the cash) So he set her off to sea, and what kind of story would it be if she didn't sink. (insert Celine Dion song here). So the moral of his tale is this: " You should never believe anything on insufficient evidence, especially if Leonardo Dicaprio is on your boat." It's Clifford's conviction, that it's morally wrong and cowardly to believe anything on insufficient evidence, including the existence of God. Non-rational belief in a religion leads to habitual non-rational belief in other areas of life. Believing in God because you think it's in your best interest, and because it makes you feel all warm and fuzzy inside is going to make you continue to believe in things just because they make you feel good. It's going breed chauvinism, after ' genuine' faith is instilled into your chosen religion, you're going to start to question other ones. Soon after that, you're going to announce that yours is the best, and that's probably going to make you feel good. Then you might decide, I'm white, and that must be the best too.....This is how Clifford turns something presumably beautiful and healthy and personal, like a belief in ' our lord and savior Jesus Christ and the heavenly father,' into something public and dangerous. In a nutshell.... god hasn't jumped out from behind the sofa, therefore, it's ridiculous to think he's back there. In fact, it's immoral to believe he's back there, so stop it already. If you keep up these silly notions about Christ living behind our sofa, you're going to become habitually gullible, build up a superiority complex and become a conceited chauvinist pig. Let's get a couple of recliners instead.

Upon reading The Ethics of Belief, I was baffled as to how I could find something to be so beautifully written and yet so nervy at the same time. He takes your beliefs and thoughts and turns them into a public circus, a fanfare if you will. In only two quotes he tries to rob you of what you always thought to be the only things that you could truly call your own, and makes them a public archive to be feared.

In one quote he says:

“ If a man holding a belief which he was taught in childhood or persuaded of afterwards, keeps down and pushes away any doubts which arise about it in his mind, purposely avoids the reading of books and the company of men that call in question or discuss it, and regards as impious those questions which cannot easily be asked without disturbing it – the life of that man is one long sin against mankind.”

Another:

“ Our words, our phrases, our forms and processes and modes of thought, are common property, fashioned and perfected from age to age; an heirloom which every succeeding generation inherits as a precious deposit and a sacred trust to be handed on to the next one, not unchanged but enlarged and purified, with some clear marks of it's handiwork. Into this, for good or ill, is woven every belief of every man who has speech of his fellows. An awful privilege, and an awful responsibility, that we should help to create the world in which posterity will live.”

Both beautiful quotes..... but for me to succumb to them and deem them true on the grounds that they're candy-coated and nice to look at, would be like believing in God because the church is pretty. Both quotes Erinized and put together:

" If a man is Jewish for instance, and never stops to question the beliefs that have been instilled in him since birth by attending a catholic mass, it's a big charlie horse to mankind, because our thoughts and notions are not our own, they belong to mankind. They serve no purpose but to feed the public archive, to confirm some public beliefs and to bend others, and to feed the evolution of thought. We had better be careful what we think, we have mankind to consider."

I don't like the idea that my thoughts are not my own, and that my hands are not my own. I tend to think that most of the time these are the only things that are one's own. You're given few things in this life to be held sacred as yours, the rest you have to share. So you'll have to forgive me if I'm not eager to share these sacred things. I can't say that I agree with his logic, but if I can say one thing about Clifford, he was probably pretty popular with the ladies. I've met a few like him, his ability to candy-coat are most admirable.

James seems to agree with Clifford, except in the instance that you are faced with what he calls a ' genuine option.' We decide that a genuine option is a decision between two hypotheses, when the question is of the forced, living, and momentous kind. A forced question is one where your obligated to choose one way or another, like, do I have corndogs for lunch, or do I not? quite obviously you must choose one or the other, when even doing nothing

is choosing. A living question is one where both hypotheses are live ones, and both live and dead depend on the individual thinker, like do I skip lunch and have ice cream, or do I skip lunch and have cake? both options have their appeal, and are therefore, live. Finally, a momentous question is one of great significance, like when posed with the option of going on the next mission to Mars. It seems quite momentous, it's almost certainly a once in a lifetime opportunity.

A genuine option of sorts, is this; do I take a semester off of school and tour with Phish? It's forced question, if you wait to long to decide, it'll be too late. you have to decide one way or another, there isn't anyway of being indifferent. It's a live question, if you're me. Naturally you'll jump at the chance and drop education like a hat. It's momentous, the Phish experience is bigger than all of us, and you know that they're taking next year off to go backpacking in Europe. If you don't go now, the world will end and time will cease, and life will no longer have meaning. If you're not a Phish phan, and God help you if you're not, than this does not pose a threat to your post-secondary education.

It seems as though religious faith could also be a genuine option. It is forced, you ultimately have to decide, because seemingly choosing to be an agnostic and choosing not to choose, you've still spoken volumes. Choosing to have no part in religious faith in itself seems to be choosing. It can be an option of the live kind, for almost everyone, I believe. Even Tarzan who was raised by monkeys, having never been to monkey Sunday school, must have lied on his back some nights and stared at the stars and wondered how they got there. It has some appeal, ' however small, to your belief' for most of us.
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It can also be a question of the momentous kind, 'we are supposed to gain, even now, by our belief, and to lose by our non-belief, a certain vital good', says James. I'm going to have to agree. I myself believe that we have the right to believe anything we so choose. More specifically, we have the right to believe at our own risk any hypothesis that is live enough to 'tempt our will.'

So then, with that in hand, let us now discuss the relevance of Taylor and the Cosmological Argument. "It is strange indeed that a world such as ours should exist; yet few men are often struck by this strangeness, but simply take it for granted." Most things that strike us as odd would evoke the thought, "How did that get here?" You might not have a clue how it came to be, but there would probably never be a moment when you thought there should be no explanation at all. Few times do we consider the possibility that perhaps it came about all by chance, or came from nothing. As Taylor points out, the nonexistence of anything never requires a reason; but existence of something, that always requires a reason. This basic idea that to every truth there is a cause is referred to as the Principle of Sufficient Reason. Other truths, however, are dependent on something else, and called contingent, while some things depend only on themselves, and they are called necessary.

Apply this of this to the question of the existence of God and you get the Cosmological Argument: the idea that a contingent world requires the existence of God as its ultimate cause. The physical laws and initial conditions of the universe are fine-tuned to make possible the evolution of intelligent life. Everything it seems has a scientific cause, it must, says <https://assignbuster.com/either-god-exists-or-he-doesnt-there-is-no-middl-essay/>

Taylor. One would think it ludicrous to say that my left sock came to be of its own free will, that it came from nothing. If I told you that there was a hot flash, and suddenly time and space and my left sock were created, you'd be pretty unsatisfied. So why then, is this an acceptable analogy for the universe? Surely the universe requires a First Cause. This is basically the point Taylor was trying to make when he used the example of the translucent ball in the forest; an unlikely object in an unlikely place. You would hardly question that this translucent ball (and my left sock) came to be all on its own, that it didn't owe its existence to anything or anyone. You might not have any clue as to how it came about, but you would be relatively certain that there was an explanation. This illustrates what Taylor calls a metaphysical belief "that seems to be almost a part of reason itself", the belief that the existence of anything requires an explanation, some reason why it should exist rather than not. The non-existence of something never requires an explanation, but this is not to be confused with the end of existence of something. If you looked into a bathtub and asked, 'why isn't there a toaster in there?' Unless the tub-owner has some issues, one would expect an answer like, 'why should there be?' If there did happen to be a toaster in the bathwater, and people wanted answers, it would seem unlikely that anyone would answer, "why not?"

To say that God is the first cause is to say that, in short God is the creator. In calling Him the first cause, we do not mean first in time, as in God sitting down in front of his home computer and creating time and space. To say that God is the first cause is simply calling him what Taylor calls a primary rather

than a secondary cause, or “ a being upon which all other things, heaven and earth, ultimately depend for their existence.”

This piece of evidence is supposed to seal into the minds of the masses, that since the universe must have had a first cause, that first cause must have been God. I'm not going to attempt to make or break this argument, because I think it fits into what I like to call the ' Popeye Equation.' Meaning, it is what it is. I think it's a respectable theory in it's own right, and I'm not going to say that God wasn't the first cause of the universe; I like the idea just as much as the next guy, but I don't think that this necessarily seals the envelope. It seems to me, that if I found a pie and I couldn't figure out where it came from, I would be no closer to understanding it's origin by announcing that since every pie must have a first cause, it was made by my Mom.

And in the other side of the ring, we have Morris and the Big Bang theory, which is the theory that time and space were created in a hot flash - everything was in the same spot, and just blew up. The first evidence he presents is Earth's constant microwave radiation bath. Equally strong, day or night, from every region of the sky, the Earth is under constant and unvarying radiation. There has never been any significant disagreement among scientists as to the origin of this radiation; it is the afterglow of the big bang explosion in which the universe was born some 10-20 billion years ago. This is just the tip of the iceberg when talking about evidence in support of the Big Bang; in 1929 it was discovered that the universe was in a rapid state of expansion, that the galaxies are speeding away from each other, like raisins in a rising loaf of bread, says Morris. This should not lead one to belief that the universe has boundaries like a loaf pan, the raisins of the universe

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could seemingly expand into the infinite. The thought of expanding raisins makes the whole thing seem sort of arbitrary, but not so; it doesn't end here. Here is where redshifts come in. Since the longest light waves in the visible spectrum are seen by us as red, while the shortest are blue, light emitted by a source moving away from us will be seen as red. This doesn't mean that galaxies are going to appear red to the eye, but it's in this respect that redshifts can be accurately measured. By looking at these redshifts we can determine the speed of recession, and chemical composition of an object.

It also happens that there are substances in the universe that could only have been generated by the big bang. Namely, helium lithium and deuterium. Hydrogen and helium are among the most prominent and abundant elements in the universe. Everything else Morris describes as "cosmic impurities." To paint a better picture, the universe is more than 25 percent helium, and a little less than 75 percent hydrogen. Helium is created in stars, and could have only existed in the one minute span after the big bang occurred, adding another piece of evidence that the bang took place. The presence of Deuterium in the universe gives us another piece. The only place that deuterium could have been created is in the big bang.

However, it hasn't been disproven that the universe is infinitely old, and in a constant bang-crunch cycle, like one of those stress relieving squishy things people have on their desks. There are things to be considered with this theory as well. First, is there enough matter in the universe? It's not hard to imagine the universe with one less star, or a box of Lucky Charms with one less marshmallow, but can either of these things exist without? The second

thing to consider, is that there has to be a 'repulsive force' that decides when the universe would reverse itself, but what is it?

One other thing is apparent when dealing with the crunch bang theory; if this were so, clearly the first cause argument would fail, because an infinitely old universe wouldn't need a first cause; and the theist would here fail.

With that being said, it wouldn't be complete without making clear that's absolutely crucial that $\Omega = 1$. The mere formation of stars requires that this is so. Let us imagine a universe where $\Omega > 1$. This would deem a subatomic pancake-like universe, it would flatten and expand to infinity. The opposite can be said in a universe where $\Omega < 1$: this would deem a momentary universe, soon contracting and crunching into itself like a ball of tin foil. It is clear that life on this planet is owed to and absolutely dependent on $\Omega = 1$, and the odds of this are 1 in 10 quintillion. Coincidence?

There seems to be an undeniable amount of evidence supporting the big bang theory, and the religious community has recanted with this bumper sticker: "THE BIG BANG THEORY: God said the word, and BANG it happened." It seems they too can't deny the hard evidence, but refuse to be shaken by it, claiming the first cause argument; God must have created the big bang. This confirms the belief I share with Pascal, that the existence of God cannot be proven by logic alone. I will not by any means say that He does not exist, because I think Willy Wonka said it best when he said, "We should never ever doubt what no one is sure of." I believe that this is the basis of faith.

The basis of the Teleological argument is the question as to why so many things in our universe exhibit signs of order and design and purpose. It is not a stretch to define the universe as 'one great machine, subdivided into an infinite number of lesser machines', much like an automobile. A Teleological system can best be explained as parts designed specifically to work precisely together to achieve a certain purpose. You will be hardpressed to find a teleological system that is not the product of conscious design, and that's where the Teleological Argument takes its stand. Can we infer then, if the universe is indeed a teleological system, that its order and design can be credited to a conscious designer? Teleological systems aren't limited to mechanical things, many exist naturally. We could successfully argue that the human body is indeed an example of a teleological system, or more specifically, many teleological systems. The question is this then: When we examine an automobile and understand how it operates, it would be ludicrous to say that it wasn't the result of intelligent design. Why then, do we not label nature likewise? Does it not also exhibit signs of an orderly arrangement? Survival of life and organisms depend on this precise arrangement, does it not?

Human beings have always been awestruck by the intricate organization of the physical world. All these things which surround us seem to be too well arranged and perfect to be a "mindless accident". Davies opens the spectrum of scientific advancement, which only serves to feed our awe at the perfect and simple complexity of our universe. Davies points out that there are 'endless ways' in which this universe of ours might have turned out completely chaotic and lawless — but the universe is highly ordered, with

well defined laws of physics and cause and effect relationships. It all seems to be ordered in a pretty special complexity; but even it's complexity is organized. It seems almost too good to be true that these complex laws should be definable by relatively simple mathematics, with seemingly "unreasonable effectiveness." It seems that ours is not just any universe, but one which Davies comments, has adjusted remarkably well. The fact that nature is so happy to comply with biology's specific demands is most puzzling as well. Let's face it, life as we know it depends fully on the laws and properties of physics; the fine-tuning of the universe is even more astounding when you consider that almost every other 'tuning' would render the universe uninhabitable. These revelations would make one think that the universe indeed exhibits signs of order and purpose; quite perfectly in fact. This is the basis of the Principle of Cosmological Design; which states that the physical laws and initial conditions of the universe are fine tuned to make possible the evolution of intelligent life.

There is plenty of evidence that the Earth in fact, exhibits signs of order. The seasons themselves run their course as we expect them to, we rather take them for granted. The fact that there are consistently 24 hours in a day, proves that the earth is a teleological system. Determining that the universe is a teleological system proves to be a loftier task. It is one thing to believe the universe contains parts which are teleological systems, and another thing to believe that the universe itself is a teleological system. We have no evidence by looking only at the small fragment of our universe available to us that would show that the universe itself has a purpose, and that the parts

work together to achieve that purpose. At best, we can say only that the universe contains many parts which are teleological systems.

The Teleological Argument is supposed to prove that the universe is the product of conscious design, and a conscious creator. So let us look at this conscious creator. Theism conceives of God as the "supreme being, unsurpassed in greatness, the one in whom all perfections meet in perfect harmony", says Hudson. Basically saying, that God is omnipotent, and God is omniscient; all powerful and all knowing. We should take a moment to define exactly what an omnipotent omniscient being cannot do. The existence of an omnipotent being obviously implies monotheism, because there clearly can only be one omnipotent being, because that would mean there was something, or someone beyond His control. We decide that an omnipotent being cannot do the logically impossible, cannot change the past, or determine future events. An omniscient being cannot know the logically impossible, know future events; and omniscient being knows everything that can be known. But importantly, an omniscient being does not know what it's like to be human, and does not know feelings like hope and fear. God is supposed to be incorporeal, bodiless. A consciousness, if you will. So obviously, God can be neither male or female, because to be either requires a body, which God has no use for. In summary, God is incorporeal, omniscient and omnipotent.

Since the development of the theory of evolution, the Teleological Argument has lost some of the persuasive force that it once enjoyed. So whether the Darwinian theory of natural selection is true or false, it does stand in competition with the intelligent designer hypotheses as a possible

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explanation for why nature is so abundant with organisms so strangely fitted to their survival. The theory of biological evolution developed by Charles Darwin and others, states that all species of organisms arise and develop through the natural selection of small, inherited variations that increase the individual's ability to compete, survive, and reproduce, and seeks to explain the origin, diversity and complexity of life. Darwin says that in biology there's random variation, mutations if you will, sexual selection and regrouping, selective retention; and all this feeds the theory that those who are fit for their environments will survive. Survival of the fit. Small changes over a long period of time can accumulate, resulting in complex but useful variation. Hence, says Darwin, "as more individuals are produced than can possible survive, there must in every case be a struggle for existence". It's this struggle that's responsible for any variation, however small, that might better a species' welfare. It would in fact be unusual if throughout time, no variations had turned out to be useful.

A good example of useful variation, is the giraffe. Consider that the giraffe didn't always have a long neck, because they didn't need one. It isn't hard to see that when it did become necessary to reach food higher up in the trees, the ones with the longest necks would have the greatest chance of survival. From the strong principle of inheritance these slightly longer necked giraffes would tend to produce similar offspring, and since it was these slightly longer necked giraffes that were more likely to survive, it was very likely that a slightly longer necked giraffe would mate with one like it, and so on, and so on.

Darwin compares 'beings of the same class' to a big tree. The new buds and twigs represent the existing species, and at each period of growth all the growing twigs have tried to branch out on all sides, to cover and kill the surrounding twigs and branches, the same way that species have tried to overmaster other species in the "great battle for life". Of the many twigs that flourished when the tree was nothing more than a bush, only a few have grown into branches; much like the species which lived thousands and thousands of years ago, very few have living varied descendents.

Many limbs and branches have rotted and fallen off, which represent the species that just couldn't hack it.

Dawkins explains the origin of life this way: 4 thousand million years ago the seas were nothing but Cambell's "primeval soup". After the organic structures in the soup (the beef chunks) became locally concentrated, energy from the sun made them combine into larger molecules. At some point a beef chunk was formed by accident. For our purposes we'll call him Stan, the lone replicator beef chunk. He might not have been the biggest or tastiest beef chunk, but he had the crazy property of being able to create copies of himself. However unlikely it seems, consider that over the course of hundreds of millions of years lots of improbable things can and will occur. So this lone beef chunk populated the seas with chunks in his likeness, but he was not a perfect beef chunk, he did occasionally make mistakes.

Erratic copying of beef chunks can give rise to improvement, and it was vital to the evolution of beef chunks that some became tastier over time. It is these mistakes that made evolution of high grade beef possible. As

miscopyings were made, the soup became stew, filled by several varying grades of beef chunks, all decedents of Stan, the lone beef chunk. Some grades would become more prominent in the beef community, probably because some grades of beef chunks replicated at a faster rate than others. Another characteristic to be considered is accuracy of replication. Some grades of beef chunks were probably more accurate, took their jobs more seriously than others. This will also affect the varying population of beef chunks in the primeval stew. This stew must have been ultimately successful in it's concocting, it must have been populated by good tasty beef chunks, either in that they were chop full of preservatives, and lasted a long time, or that they replicated quickly, or accurately.

It was bound to happen: the stew was becoming thick. This particular primeval stew was not capable of supporting an infinite number of beef chunks. After all, a can only holds 12 ounces. We must also consider, that for a beef chunk to be good and healthy, it must have it's own good share of broth, which is rich in vitamins and minerls necessary to create replicas; and broth is certainly finite. So the war between the chunks began. It proved to be a matter of survival of the fittest, only the high grade chunks would prevail. As Cambell's upped it's standards, the low grade chunks would ultimately lose. It is then that chunks began to use battle stradegies, the high grade chunks began building vegetables to protect them, first peas, and then as times got tougher, they needed bigger vegetables, like carrots and potatoes. So what has become of this primeval stew? It's in your stomach and in mine, and they created us. They have come along way, those beef

chunks. So next time you ponder your current state of being, just think of Stan.

If God is all-powerful and all-knowing, then evil must not exist apart from God. For it to do so under those criterion would be impossible. This leads you to question the true power of God, and the true good of God. If God is all good, and has the power to stop evil and doesn't, then God must have a slightly nasty disposition, and therefore is not all good. If God wishes to stop evil and can't, then God is not omnipotent: He is limited. If God is perfect, than why does he let this happen? At this angle, it seems foolish that we should worship the being that seemingly subjects us to such pain and anguish, doesn't it? You might picture being 7 in a classroom, and the boy who sits behind you pulls your hair everyday and makes you cry. The teacher knows he does it, and is within her power to stop it one way or another, but chooses to do nothing. In this scenario you'd imagine that you would grow to hate the boy and hate the teacher as well. So why then, in this similar situation do we not condemn God for his passive nature with all this evil going on? Theists have the burden of explaining how a being that is all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-good can allow evil to exist, and why a perfect being does or might allow horrible evils to exist in our world.

The problem of evil lies in its origin: Does evil come from God? In spite of God? Using theodicy to define evil is basically an attempt to affirm God's omnipotence and His love for humans, with the existence of evil and without contradiction. Depending on your religious background, the weight each of these options carry may vary greatly. A theist might argue that evil isn't a problem of coherence at all, for it to be a problem, you must question Gods' <https://assignbuster.com/either-god-exists-or-he-doesnt-there-is-no-middl-essay/>

power, character, and/or His existence. A theist may also say that evil is a practical truth, as it will require us the courage to forgive and to heal, or they might also hold the belief that to obtain moral perfection, we must face challenges and overcome them. Other appeals often made by theists to explain evil might be: a sin is punished with suffering; having free will enables us to make choices, either for good or for evil.

Moral evil is simply an intentional wrong action, where humans or animals suffer. It seems to have a deep root in human existence, it's probably how, over the years we've coined the phrase, "that's life." The question doesn't often come up of why this is. It's all we know. I'm not suggesting that life is merely one long string of time and pain, because I think when asked the question, most people would say that if they had to choose between grief and nothing, they'd choose grief. It's part of life. When identifying the magnitude of moral evil, such things come to mind as the Holocaust, The Oklahoma City bombing, events where the disgusting loss of life can only be blamed on moral evil, namely moral evil on a grand scale. One struggles to explain how men of seemingly sound mind and body would intentionally commit these types of evil, when there is clearly so much evil in the world already.

The distribution of Moral evil is perhaps the most frustrating aspect, because too often innocent people and animals are the victims of crime and injustice. Perhaps it would seem less of an injustice if moral evil was distributed among those who committed the evil. Innocent little old ladies are often the targets of handbag theft, and why does this happen? Why does no one steal the purses of the crack whores? Innocent little ants are often the victims of

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freak toddler-shoe homicides; and is that right? Wouldn't it be fair then, to turn the shoe to communists? After all, everyone knows communists are evil, why does no one step on them? Dostoevsky hits a nerve when he raises the question of the suffering of children. What reason could anyone possibly find that a child should be subjected to injustice? One question will continue to surface, WHY? Whatever the reason, moral evil is seldom distributed how we would like, and it's a shame, because everyone feels compassion for little old ladies and innocent ants.

Natural evil on the other hand, is more random. You would be hard pressed to convict anyone for committing hurricane freud, or tornado homicide. Sometimes referred to as 'acts of God,' these are the kinds of evil that cannot be blamed on humanity. Not to be outdone by moral evil however, the magnitude of natural evil seems to be responsible for an equally disgusting loss of human and animal life. Disease, famine, and fire cause death and misery for millions of lives. Although the distribution of physical evil can't be assigned a pattern, it still seems as though the victims are never what we would label as 'deserving' of natural evil. Perhaps it's human nature to feel compassion for victims of any kind of evil because living in an 'imperfect' world we can always identify.

It can be said that evil of any variety is almost never regarded by humanity as right and just, unless perhaps it's a situation of incredible irony, where sin is turned to sinner. Unfortunately as we can infer from the general distribution of evil, it almost never happens that way. And I suppose it's not for us to decide, after all is said and done, who should be punished and who should be spared. When you start to look at evil in such a broad and general

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light, it begins to lose it's meaning, I think. For evil to be understood I think it's best studied one heart at a time, because that's where it strikes it's chord. That's where it begins.

It will seem, momentarily, that the materialist has made a momentous point in the Problem of Evil. How can a perfect God create an imperfect world? How can the teacher continue to let that obnoxious little boy pull your hair and make you cry? Hick answers with the Free Will Theodicy. We decide this: human beings are created at an epistemic distance from God, meaning, we're on a different level of consciousness than God – and we decide that it needs to be this way in order to come about faith freely and in one's own time. At the same time we were created as immature and morally imperfect beings, in order to attain through freedom the most valuable quality of goodness. It is seemingly God's purpose to grow perfect human persons, rather than create them. We suppose an omnipotent God could have created us perfect if he chose to, but much like vitamin supplements, they do the job but it's certainly not the best way to get them. Freely chosen virtues are more valuable than angelic virtues.

Moral evil serves the purpose of challenging our faith and forcing us to face our fears. This is ultimately how one gets to heaven. We are given the freedom to make immoral or moral decisions, and having that choice allows us to choose the road we wish to walk upon. Human persons will become morally and spiritually perfect through moral choice, and this mixed world is the best possible world, evil is necessary for moral virtue. Summed up, for every evil there comes a greater good, and that good is moral and spiritual growth.

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In this process of growing perfect human persons, like a plant needs sun and water to grow, the human person needs motivation and challenges. God motivates and challenges by dropping us into an imperfect world. The belief that life is unfair, (and my parents made sure I knew that early on) motivates people to correct the injustices and adversities. It is decided that by being submerged in imperfections, we will overcome. So evil is necessary then, says Hick, " A world with no pain or suffering would also be one in which there could be no moral choices and hence no possibility of moral growth and development. If we lived in a " perfect" happy world free of danger, suffering, need, irritation, betrayal, we could never develop courage, compassion, forgiveness, and patience and self sacrifice; all things vital to moral and spiritual growth.

If you were never wronged or betrayed you would never learn to forgive. If there was no need in the world, you would never learn sacrifice, or what it means to be unselfish and giving. If there was no danger in the world there would be no such thing as bravery, and Arnold Schwarzenegger would be out of a job. If every want or desire was met with instant gratification, you would never learn patience (or learn the value of a dollar, by god. In my day.....). If it was your way or the highway, you'd never learn to compromise, and if there were no obstacles , you'd never know how good it felt to rise above.

So why then, the magnitude of these evils? It can be said, arguably, that free will has no limits. A human being can be as evil or as good as he can ordain, and therefore the magnitude of moral evil is seemingly limitless. Not exactly comforting; but for God to step in the way of a person committing a moral

evil would be to close the vital epistemic gap, which we decided was necessary for moral growth. Clearly moral evil is necessary in the growth of a perfect human person, as is natural evil. The belief that there is a limitless amount of evil in the world is imperative to motivate people to make this world of ours a better place, by devoting themselves to moral struggle. As a direct result they become better people, moving closer and closer to God's ultimate goal of growing into a perfect human person.

God has planted us in a world full of unpredictable contingencies and peril, in which unforeseen and undeserved calamities can happen to anyone; because only in such a world can mutual caring and love be grown. Although this seems to be a reality that offers little comfort to those who receive the brunt of evil in the name of the common good, it remains a small consolation that the guilty will be punished in hell, and the innocent are supposed to be compensated in heaven. This seems all well and good.... but if the innocent people who got screwed over on earth are going to be compensated in heaven, then what about the innocent people who just got lucky? Is there like a first class section of heaven for the people who had it really bad, where you get lots of leg room and free booze? The coach section of heaven for the people who just never got screwed over, where they serve soft drinks and peanuts in 'not for individual resale' packages? I guess we shall see.

“ The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect, over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked; his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire; he is of purer eyes than to bear to have you

in his sight; you are ten thousand times so abominable in his eyes, as the most hateful and venomous serpent is in ours.....”

The fact that this is the first sentence in a four and a half page essay kind of scared the crap out of me, which might explain why i skipped over it the first time. I thought to myself, “ DAMN I’m busted! I’m grounded for sure!” I started getting flash backs from my hellian early high school years...and thought maybe i was safer not reading it. Edwards had a pretty good time with this didn’t he? Give this man a soap box. The words ‘ fury’ and ‘ wrath’ seem pretty adement here.... in fact, he says ‘ wrath’ and ‘ fury’ 43 times.

Another quote:

“ Consider this, you that are here present, that yet remain in an unregenerate state. That God will execute the fierceness of his anger, implies, that he will inflict wrath without pity: when God beholds the ineffable extremity of your case, and sees your torment so vastly disproportioned to your strength, and sees how your poor soul is crushed, and sinks down, as it were, into an infinite gloom; he will have no compassion upon you, he will not forbear the executions of his wrath.....”

According to the ‘ Doctrine of Hell’, some people are doomed to hell, with no possibility of escape, and according to Edwards, this is pretty fair. God is going to damn you eternally, (and he even might like it a little bit), and when you beg for mercy and scream apologies, and realize the error of your ways.....he’s going to laugh at you and kick you in the knee cap. So act now, Edwards says, now is your chance, Christ has flung the doors of mercy wide

open! 'renounce your youthful vanities and flock to Christ'.....What a relief. And here I thought I was doomed to wrath and fury to the 43rd power.

Still, the materialist is not yet satisfied; the Free Will Theodicy is incoherent, says the materialist. What happened to every evil serving a greater purpose? How can you condemn these people to do your bidding on earth, since according to the free will theodicy, there must be evil, and then condemn their souls to Hell eternally? No good can possibly come from eternal damnation, infinite suffering with no chances of redemption. The punishment for being a 'bad person' seems disproportionate and impetuous.

Nonbelievers do not deserve damnation. It seems rather, like a set up. God needs moral evil to grow his perfect human persons, so it's not ridiculous to assume that he put it here. So how could he damn his pawns? It seems incoherent.

Similarly, the materialist doesn't like Heaven either. The Heaven in scripture is made out to be a 'happy world' of sorts, where all is good, and loving and peaceful. The materialists asks this; is there free will in heaven? The theist is kind of backed into a wall; let's look at both answers. If he says yes, there is certainly free will in heaven, it is heaven after all. Then there must be moral evil in heaven, because free will is limitless. If he says no, there isn't free will in heaven, then there will be no moral growth in heaven, and moral growth in heaven is necessary, because the enormous majority of men and women will ultimately die before achieving 'perfect human person' status. Eric Fromm said this, "The tragedy in the life of most of us is that we die before we are fully born." I think it's the hope of everyone that the only things left unfinished when judgement day arrives, are the dishes and the laundry. But <https://assignbuster.com/either-god-exists-or-he-doesnt-there-is-no-middle-essay/>

for most of us, it's more than we can hope for. This can only mean that there has to be a continuation of our lives on some other higher level of consciousness, after bodily death; if God's plan is to create perfect human persons is to manifest. Moral growth must also take place in heaven, because otherwise children will remain children. Or at least that's what I'm supposed to effectively argue. But since this is my paper and it's 6 am and this heaven scenario of yours frustrates me to no end, it's my turn.

The first question that you need to ask, is if there can exist, an infinite number of souls. When you ponder on the life that has preceded us, it seems like if this were feasible, heaven would be wall to wall souls, a metropolis of sorts. Consider for a moment, that it's not feasible. Consider that God's plan is not to create perfect human persons, in the sense of a single lifetime, a single body. God's ultimate goal is to create perfect human souls, over the course of many lifetimes. Each life adding to the moral goodness, each life teaching different virtues. It seems unlikely that perfection could be achieved over the course of a single lifetime, especially when a 'lifetime' is so dependent and variable. So when you take this view, heaven doesn't seem so material. When you view humanity as a collection of souls, together to create a flow of consciousness, heaven takes shape, or lack thereof, rather.

When you realize the possibility of this scenario, that life is generated in forms and lifetimes to feed the good of humanity, that all of them together create a teleological system of working parts, servicing each other, the idea of a child in heaven seems ridiculous. Human bodies are nothing more than vehicles for the soul, it seems to me. The age of a human body would have <https://assignbuster.com/either-god-exists-or-he-doesnt-there-is-no-middl-essay/>

no bearing on the age of the soul, though some souls are older than others. Their ultimate objection of humanity is to evolve together, and move from one phase of consciousness to the next one; as our current phase of consciousness is certainly not the only phase. The issue of free will in heaven seems immaterial, because free will to a soul seems arbitrary and meaningless, like a body to a soul is arbitrary and meaningless. And that's where I will take my stand.

My task now, to assess the arguments for and against the existence of God. A restatement of the arguments would seem redundant at this point, as I've just spent 12 pages presenting them, and you should take credit for presenting me with the biggest challenge of my post secondary education. With that being said, it is my significant conclusion, that God exists in my world, although I agreed with Pascal when he said that the existence of God cannot be proven using logic. God is clearly above logic, He just IS. I don't acknowledge that my belief in a God is going to 'save my soul' as Pascal's wager suggests, or anyone's for that matter. In fact it seems kind of silly that anyone should concern themselves with the beliefs of other people at all, when you realize that the issue is entirely personal. The idea that religious belief is a dangerous thing seems to be a pretty heavy accusation on Clifford's part, and especially nervy when he tries to steal your thoughts to top it off. The idea that God is vengeful or spiteful and would commit me to damnation for not following the ways of his specified religion, like Edwards suggests, seems ludicrous, as this is my favorite word. If this was the case, then almost all of the free world, save for whatever religion happens to be the 'right' one would be damned for all eternity. Ludicrous.

I have to succumb to the Cosmological and Teleological arguments, even though they don't prove anything. I won't join the masses that want to fight them to the death because it's a pointless battle. I can't even imagine why anyone would want to prove that the universe was a big accident, that we're all doomed to be the meaningless specks that we sometimes presume, and that when the coin falls we won't exist to see that it's tails. It boggles my mind that people should dedicate their lives to proving that humanity means nothing, that we mean nothing.

I'm also not going to fight biology, and the laws of physics and the theory of evolution. I don't agree with the Christian view that God and evolution cannot peacefully coexist. I think they can, and they have to. They better get used to each other, and learn to get along. Biology isn't going anywhere. This isn't grade school, we can't just separate them.

I continue to secretly marvel at the organization of the universe, and the sheer madness of it all. The way our world is in constant and perfect state of complexity, it baffles the hell out of me. The word 'coincidence' wasn't created to fill shoes this big, I think it's ridiculous to try and put a word the size of a tic-tac into a space the size of a whale. I can't believe that anyone truly believes it belongs there.

When I said I considered myself a recovering Catholic I meant it truly, because I think belief in God in a strictly biblical sense is pretentious, when one considers that almost none of it claims to be the word of God, and even if it were the word of God, so much of the original meaning was lost in the translation that it's not even accurate anymore. Mary for instance, wasn't

even a virgin in the original story, but the Catholic religion makes a really big stink about what a miracle it was. Christianity tried to conquer the world, and I think it almost did. You can still see the high water mark where the wave finally broke, when you pick up any history book.