

Chris Connolly
Professor Young
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The God Problem

Let us assume God is real. For some, this assumption is hard to make without a sufficient amount of evidence. However, my goal is not to prove his existence, but rather to examine the mysterious ways in which He works if He were to exist. I won't ask you to abandon your beliefs or convert to any specific religion. I only ask that you join me in exploring the possibilities behind this assumption, first.

The one thing we should be able to agree on, despite what your religion may be, is that, if God does exist, he should be capable of doing anything (omnipotence). Of course, this principle usually stems from the belief that God was responsible for the creation of the universe and also the basic design that allowed for the creation of life on Earth. In conversations concerning God, we always seem to assume that God is an all-powerful, all-knowing, and perfectly good entity.

If this were true, however, it becomes difficult for us to maintain our belief in Him when bad things happen to inherently good people. His very existence may be questionable, but the presence of evil in our world is all too real for us to deny that bad things do happen on a daily basis. If we are to stick to our original assumption, we can only then conclude that either God is not perfectly good or everything happens for a reason. The latter means that some greater good may eventually present itself from the occasional presence of evil and misfortune. This belief is what we have come to define as theodicy. By drawing this conclusion, however, we seem to have indirectly destroyed the belief of free will by trying to attach reason to

the unexplainable. When we say, “there’s a reason for everything,” we make the assumption that God is aware of the future effects evil will have on us and therefore permits it to occur. This, in turn, suggests that the future has already been written and God is the best-selling author. So could it be that the presence of evil is proof in itself that we are in control of our own destiny?

If there is a lesson to be learned behind every evil action, God must be designing the very nature of this evil so that it can affect the right people correctly. The issue here is conceptualizing the idea of who the *right* people are. If all humans are mortal beings, hurtling toward death, then why do we continue to believe His actions will always serve to benefit a particular set of people? In other words, considering Him to be an immortal being, why do we think He cares about the temporary effects evil may have on us (no matter how good they may be) when people are constantly dying and being born every second? For there to be some benefit from the presence of evil, the action must be of a particular nature so that its effects on us are either lasting or great enough to affect a considerable amount of people. The problems with this are when evil affects the innocent and no one seems to have learned anything, when the guilty are allowed to run free, and, more importantly, when the innocent are incarcerated for crimes they did not commit.

The movie, [The Tree of Life](#), examines this very issue. If God were perfectly good, then why would he feel the need to take the life of an innocent, pacifistic, young boy? Though the answer is not stated outright in the film, it becomes clear that the effects of his death have a direct influence on the dynamics of his immediate family. The juxtaposition of Brad Pitt’s strict fatherly character and the idea that God

has taken his son from him forces us to assume that God is trying to teach him to cherish the lives of his sons rather than taking them for granted. The same goes for the oldest son, who blames his father for the unhappiness that surrounds the household whenever he is around. We see him as a grown adult, calling his father and sharing a moment with him over the death of his brother. Had the boy lived a full life, it's hard for us to believe Sean Penn's character would've had any inclination to call his father with the fear that he may one day lose him, too, without fully expressing his love for him. By the end of the movie, we see the entire family, including the late middle child, embracing one another in what appears to be a representation of heaven. Here is where I drew the conclusion that God may have chosen to end this boy's life because of his inherent integrity. In other words, out of all of the members of the family, the middle child managed to prove to God that he was worthy enough to skip the experience of life and enter heaven at a young age. This, I suppose, is where the line, "only the good die young," came from. Only those who have proven themselves to be perfectly good are allowed the privilege of dying at a young age. Along with this, God may have felt that the boy's untimely death would benefit the rest of the family by pulling them closer together. The mother may appear to be the most gracious of them all at first; however, she chooses to do nothing about her husband's aggressive behavior when her son takes a stand against him at the dinner table. Also, if the mother's life were to be taken, the father would be forced to raise the boys in the absence of the mother's grace, and their lives would be shaped incorrectly.

My belief is that God does not control the actions of his children. He simply provides us with the capacity for evil so that he may judge us on the choices that we make. However, at the same time, He may not even care about the nature of our actions at all. From the eyes of an immortal being, our purpose on this Earth may only be to serve as His entertainment and nothing more. The amount of time that we spend on this Earth is only a fraction of a second compared to the eternity He has spent watching over us. So wouldn't it only make sense that we, as a growing number of unique individuals, are not as important as we may lead ourselves to believe? After all, who are we to assume that every single person on this planet exists to serve a particular purpose in life? Are we really that narcissistic to believe something is going to happen to us after we've passed away? Do we really need to continue theorizing about life after death in order to function correctly in our society? Can't we just consider ourselves to be a collection of living organisms that are lucky enough to be sharing the experience of life with one another?

Nevertheless, our decisions to act vindictively or graciously are what allow us to continue believing in our own free will. God may hope that we model ourselves to be perfectly good citizens, but abolishing the presence of evil in the world would simply be impractical, as evil will almost always serve for the benefit of a greater good.