



Mixology and Theology

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Week Fourteen: El Diablo and Theodicy

Mixology: El Diablo

The recipe for the El Diablo cocktail first appeared in print as the Mexican El Diablo in “Trader Vic’s Book of Food and Drink,” which was published in 1946 and lists Vic as the drink’s creator (later recipes shortened the name to El Diablo, as it’s been known ever since).

If you have crème de cassis for this and don’t know what to do with it after... The Kir is a simple cocktail made with 1/2 oz crème de cassis and 5 oz dry white wine. Pour the crème de cassis in the wine glass, and slowly add the wine.

El Diablo

1 ½ oz tequila
½ oz crème de cassis
½ oz lime juice
3 oz ginger beer
lime wedge for garnish

1. Add tequila, crème de cassis, and lime juice to a shaker with ice. Shake until well chilled.
2. Strain into a tall glass over ice. Pour ginger beer on top.
3. Add lime wedge to garnish.

El Diablo Mocktail

6 oz ginger beer (or ginger ale, ginger beer is non-alcoholic but stronger in flavor)
½ oz lime juice
2 tbs black currant juice
or ½ tbs black currant syrup
or substitute concord grape juice
or pomegranate juice
lime wedge for garnish

1. Add lime juice and black currant syrup or other juice to a glass with ice. Stir well.
2. Pour ginger beer on top.
3. Garnish with lime wedge.

Theology: Theodicy

The problem: How to understand the reality of God in the face of evil?

Theodicy literally means: Justification of God.

The question: If God is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, omnibenevolent... why does God allow evil to exist?

The clarification: What do we mean by God, and what do we mean by evil? How we answer those questions affects how we respond to the question of God and evil.

Traditional characteristics of God in Christian theology:

- Omnipotent: God has the power to prevent or end evil.
- Omniscient: God has full knowledge of the reality of evil.
- Omnipresent: God is everywhere in creation including where there is evil.
- Omnibenevolent: God is all loving and just and cares for people who are suffering.

How can all of these be true at the same time and evil exists? Which one or two are you willing to let go of to make it make sense?

What is evil?

Evil is related to suffering and injustice of humans. It's hard to look at the created world in and of itself and see evil.

Natural evil: Suffering caused by the natural world: natural disaster, disease, death.

Moral evil: Suffering and injustice caused by humans: oppression, murder, domination, economic systems that privilege few, physical and emotional harm, social evil.

Approaches to Theodicy

Manicheism

"A dualistic religious system with Christian, Gnostic, and pagan elements, founded in Persia in the 3rd century by Manes (c. 216– c. 276). The system was based on a supposed primeval conflict between light and darkness. It spread widely in the Roman Empire and in Asia, and survived in eastern Turkestan (Xinjiang) until the 13th century."

Essentially, Manichaeism says there is a good god and an evil god, battling it out throughout the course of history.

Manichaeism was long considered to be a heresy within Christianity, but it was also a separate religious tradition. Augustine was a Manichaeist until he converted to Christianity. Some would say his theology reflects some of the dualistic thinking of Manichaeism.

It is clear from biblical and Christian tradition that evil cannot be given some ontological reality apart from God. If there is some evil force (devil, Satan, etc.) at work in the world, it is still a part of God's created world. So belief in a devil does not solve the problem of evil within a monotheistic faith that emphasizes God's creative power and goodness.

Irenaeus (died c. 202)

Irenaeus, born in the early second century, expressed ideas which explained the existence of evil as necessary for human development. Irenaeus argued that human creation comprised two parts: humans were made first in the image, then in the likeness, of God. The image of God consists of having the potential to achieve moral perfection, whereas the likeness of God is the achievement of that perfection. To achieve moral perfection, Irenaeus suggested that humans must have free will. To achieve such free will, humans must experience suffering and God must be at an epistemic distance (a distance of knowledge) from humanity. Therefore, evil exists to allow humans to develop as moral agents.

Origen (185 – 253)

Origen used two metaphors for the world: it is a school and a hospital for souls, with God as Teacher and Physician, in which suffering plays both an educative and healing role. Through an allegorical reading of Exodus and the books of Solomon, Origen casts human development as a progression through a series of stages which take place in this life and after death. Origen believed that all humans will eventually reach heaven as the logical conclusion of God being 'all in all'. Origen was a universalist who taught that all souls pre-existed the creation and will be reconciled with God. He was posthumously declared a heretic centuries later, but had a significant influence on early Christian theology.

Augustine (354 – 430)

God created the world perfectly, with no evil or human suffering. Evil entered the world through the disobedience of Adam and Eve. Augustinian theodicy casts the existence of evil as a just punishment for this original sin, arguing that humans have an evil nature in as much as it is deprived of its original goodness, form, order, and measure due to the inherited original sin of Adam and Eve, but still ultimately remains good due to existence coming from God, for if a nature was completely evil (deprived of the good), it would cease to exist. God remains blameless and good.

Thomas Aquinas (1225 – 1274)

Aquinas was a scholastic philosopher and theologian heavily influenced by Augustine. He proposed a form of the Augustinian theodicy in his *Summa Theologica*. Aquinas attested that God is good and must have a morally sufficient reason for allowing evil to exist. Aquinas proposed that all goodness in the world must exist perfectly in God, and that, existing perfectly, God must be perfectly good. He concluded that God is goodness, and that there is no evil in God.

Aquinas supported Augustine's view that evil is a privation of goodness, maintaining that evil has existence as a privation intrinsically found in good. The existence of this evil, Aquinas believed, can be completely explained by free will. Faced with the assertion that humans would have been better off without free will, he argued that the possibility of sin is necessary for a perfect world, and so individuals are responsible for their sin. Good is the cause of evil, but only owing to fault on the part of the agent. In his theodicy, to say something is evil is to say that it lacks goodness which means that it could not be part of God's creation, because God's creation lacked nothing. Aquinas noted that, although goodness makes evil possible, it does not necessitate evil. This means that God (who is good) is not cast as the cause of evil, because evil arises out of a defect in an agent, and God is seen to be without defect.

In all of these theodicies, theologians try to cling to the traditional characteristics of God named above, and try hard to make it work out. In some modern theodicies, one or more of the classical characteristics of God are rejected.

Process Theology

Based on the process philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead (1861 – 1947), proposing that the world should be understood as a reality in process, or becoming, or evolving, influenced by Darwin. Charles Hartshorne (1897 – 2000, UT Austin professor 1962 to retirement) developed process theology in which God exists in a dynamic relationship with the material world, which God did not create “out of nothing;” rather, God creatively orders the material stuff. Hartshorne accepts that, by definition, God is perfect. However, he maintains that classical theism, be it Jewish, Christian, or Muslim, has held to a self-contradictory notion of perfection. He argues that the classical concept of a deity for which all potentialities are actualized fails. Hartshorne has attempted to break a perceived stalemate in theology over the problem of evil and God's omnipotence. For Hartshorne, perfection means that God cannot be surpassed in his social relatedness to every creature. God is capable of surpassing himself by growing and changing in his knowledge and feeling for the world.

Is there a difference between Manichaeism and process theology, if the stuff of the world that God orders is separate and apart from God, even if existing within God? Process theology is willing to relinquish God's omnipotence and redefine God's goodness.

Post-Holocaust Jewish and Christian Rejection of Theodicy

In the face of the reality of the Holocaust, many Jewish and Christian theologians say the whole notion of theodicy is to be rejected. The idea of trying to “justify God” in the face of evil is inappropriate and ultimately gives justification for evil which cannot be justified. In 1998, Jewish theologian Zachary Braiterman coined the term *anti-theodicy* in his book *(God) After Auschwitz* to describe Jews, both in a biblical and post-Holocaust context, whose response to the problem of evil is protest and refusal to investigate the relationship between God and suffering. An anti-theodicy acts in opposition to a theodicy and places full blame for all experience of evil onto God, but must rise from an individual's belief in and love of God. Anti-theodicy has been likened to Job's protests in the Book of Job. Braiterman wrote that an anti-theodicy rejects the idea that there is a meaningful relationship between God and evil or that God could be justified for the experience of evil.

Atheism

Modern atheism has been one response to the reality of evil, which is to say that belief in a good and powerful God makes no sense in a world with so much suffering, or if God did exist, God would not be worthy of worship.

Old Testament and Theodicy

The Old Testament is rich with varied and sometimes contradictory responses to the problem of God and evil/suffering. We can categorize them in several ways.

Deuteronomy: Suffering is the result of breaking the covenant of the Law with God.

Wisdom: Choices have consequences. Those who suffer made bad choices.

Neither of these two “settled” responses to God and suffering were satisfying for long. One of the distinctive characteristics of the Old Testament is its inclusion of these “counter testimonies” as Walter Brueggemann calls them. Prophets cried out as God seemed to not have come through as promised. Psalmists lamented and blamed God for not listening. Two of the most significant counter testimonies are Job and Ecclesiastes

Job: Job suffers unjustly. He rejects all easy answers to the question of why – including those that other parts of Scripture offer. Ultimately he holds God accountable. God is silent until the dramatic whirlwind scene near the end, when God speaks of the greatness of creation which Job had nothing to do with. However, it does not appear that Job gets a satisfactory answer. There is great debate on interpreting the ending of this scene and what Job says in response to the great God of the whirlwind. One interpretation sounds like Job is humble and repentant. Another is that Job rejects his own previous understandings of God as a mere mortal. But another interpretation is that Job rejects the powerful, bombastic God of the whirlwind as any kind of answer. Job 42:6 is one the most difficult verses in Hebrew to translate:

Job 42:1-7 *Then Job answered the LORD: 2 "I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. 3 'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. 4 'Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you declare to me.' 5 I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; 6 **therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.**" 7 After the LORD had spoken these words to Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite: "My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends; for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.*

The problem with the traditional translation is, there is no word “myself” in Hebrew, and the verb requires a direct object. Does Job reject his own limited understanding of God, or does he reject the God he was just presented with in the whirlwind as the final wrong answer to unjust suffering?

Walter Brueggemann in his *Theology of the Old Testament* says this of the ending of Job: *This is indeed “God beyond God” who denies to Job (and to Israel) the comfort of moral symmetry. Job (and Israel) are now required to live in a world where **nothing is settled or sure or reliable except the overwhelmingness of God...** We are led to imagine that the God over whom Job and his friends have debated is, in the end, precisely one of the images prohibited by the terrible God of Sinai. The God of the whirlwind refused domestication to which Israel was intensely tempted.* (p. 391)

Ecclesiastes: At the far end of Old Testament responses to God and evil/suffering, this book explores all answers that strive to be meaningful, and continually responds: Everything is passing and vanity and nothing matters. It is a kind of theistic nihilism.

Luther and a Theology of the Cross

Luther presented a rather radical rethinking of God and human suffering in light of the cross of Christ. What he called a “theology of the cross” was not a theology of atonement theory, not a way to explain how Jesus’ death on the cross achieves forgiveness or atonement. It was Luther’s way of reinterpreting God through the cross and rejecting the God of glory, or theology of glory. As Luther said:

A theology of glory calls evil, good, and good, evil.

A theology of the cross calls a think what it is.

Luther brings an entirely different starting point for theology. He doesn't begin with the traditional characteristics of God (though he doesn't necessarily reject them). He begins with knowing God in the crucified Jesus. Who is this God who is most fully revealed in emptiness, in suffering, in rejection, in evil done to another? This is the God of profound compassion who joins human suffering and through love enacted as powerlessness brings transformation to the suffering world.

Douglas John Hall has been the most prolific modern theologian to write about Luther's theology of the cross. In his two books, *God and Human Suffering: An Exercise in the Theology of the Cross* and *The Cross in Our Context: Jesus and the Suffering World*, he explores the significance of Luther's profound rediscovery of the centrality of the cross in Christian faith. Hall writes in *God and Human Suffering* that our whole notion of power solving the problem of suffering is misplaced, and often the source of the problem:

There are, in other words, situations in which power simply does not work... There are.. analogies to God's problem of dealing with human suffering in every nook and cranny of historical existence, personal and social. Who, through power tactics, can eliminate the self-destructing habits of a son or daughter who has fallen prey to hard drugs? What nation, through power alone, can ensure world peace?... To reiterate: there are situations where power is of no avail. They are most situations in which as human beings we find ourselves! May we not also dare to say that, from the standpoint of a faith tradition which posits love, not power, as God's primary perfection, they are most of the situations in which God finds God's Self too? (pp. 98-99)

For further reading:

<https://www.therebelgod.com/2015/09/the-theology-of-cross-as-answer-to.html>

<https://baptistnews.com/article/falwell-and-luther-a-theology-of-glory-versus-a-theology-of-the-cross/>

<https://www.elca.org/JLE/Articles/810>