

Evil Is a Privation; Suffering Is Not Evil

- 1) There are negative things--e.g., holes in doughnuts, darkness, weightlessness.
- 2) Such things are **real** in the sense that they are not merely in one's mind.
- 3) Negative realities can be good things: quiet, innocence.
- 4) Some negative realities are bad: a corpse's lifelessness, a choice's nonconformity to conscience.
- 5) A privation is a negative reality--the absence of something that should be present.
- 6) All evils--all the instance of badness of all sorts--are constituted by privations.
- 7) So, a thing is made bad by a negative reality only if the latter is a privation.
- 8) Badness always affects--wounds, mutilates, spoils--something that remains good insofar as it is.
- 9) Still, considered as affected by the bad, a positive reality is thought of as bad: my bad ear.
- 10) The positive reality of human acts affected by privation also is considered bad: evil deeds, sins.
- 11) Pain is a sensation, a sensory awareness of something about to harm or harming the organism.
- 12) Even without pain, one can know something is bad; one can be intellectually aware of evil.
- 13) Both sensory and intellectual awareness of evil can provoke negative feelings.
- 14) These negative feelings--fear, sadness, anger, hatred--constitute repugnance to evil.
- 15) The experience of evil includes both awareness of it and repugnance to it.
- 16) This complex experience is the essential constituent of everything we call **suffering**.
- 17) Occasionally, awareness of evil is deceptive--e.g., phantom pain, guilt feelings without guilt.
- 18) But suffering normally is an awareness of reality and an appropriate emotional reaction to it.
- 19) Therefore, suffering is a positive reality and, as such, is good.
- 20) Moreover, suffering usually motivates people to respond appropriately to evil.
- 21) As a positive reality that motivates an appropriate response to evil, suffering is beneficial.
- 22) Still, suffering seems evil, since it accompanies evil and would not exist if there were no evil.
- 23) Also, privations can affect suffering, as they do other goods; so some sufferings are bad.
- 24) The bad, being a negative reality, does not need any ultimate cause.
- 25) God's willing **creates**. So, whenever God wills, he wills **something**--a good.
- 26) So, God does not make anything bad; he only **permits** evil in causing goods.
- 27) But insofar as suffering is good, God causes it, and it is part of his good creation.