Crimson wrote on Thu, 03 November 2005 06:23Any time I ask why there is so much evil and bad luck in this world, while "God" allegedly "loves us", all I get is "free will". No one has been able to rationally explain this to me.

Warranto has tried a bit, but I figured I'd take a stab at it too.

For starters we need to determine a suitable definition of evil. After all, in science you can't hope to explain a phenomena properly if you can't define it. Newton had this problem with gravity, which was corrected by Einstein.

Evil is not a creation in itself, it does not exist like a rock exists. It exists like a shadow exists, or cold exists. It is defined by being the absence of a creation. In the case of a shadow, it is the absence of light. In the case of cold, it is the absence of heat. In the case of evil, it is the absence of good. Because it's 'existence' is entirely dependent on good, we need to define good as well.

Essentially, good is everything that comes from God. Good being something that is created, and all creations ultimately come from God. Since good is what God does, it is impossible by definition for God not to be benevolent. His nature requires that He is benevolent, as it is part of being omnipotent and omniscient. If you understood everything, you'd know what the 'right thing' was to do in every situation you could ever face. You'd have to do what was right because it violates your very nature to do otherwise.

It should be noted, that due to this relationship between good and evil. Evil can only exist if good exists somewhere else. However good can exist on its own, without the need for evil to occur. This makes evil powerless to good. If by some fluke, evil could overcome good, it would be self defeating as it would cease to exist as well. If good overcomes evil, it probably wouldn't even notice the event happened, as it shares no connection with evil from its perspective.

By all this, we can say good is what God wants, and evil is what He doesn't want. Good is His creation, His very essence. Evil is the lack of His creation, the absence of His presence. Hopefully, we've now hammered out a definition of what constitutes good and what constitutes evil.

Now we come to humans, who have the free will to choose whether to follow God's way or not. You have the choice to do what's right, or not to do what's right. When you reject God's way, the absence you cause is 'evil'. Why would a supreme benevolence allow for this? It serves the purpose of teaching. Like a parent won't prevent every mistake of a child, so they can learn why it is 'wrong' to do something, God allows people to make mistakes because it helps people to learn why it is a mistake. Sure you can be told, but God wants you to understand, truly understand. As a finite being, understanding comes from experience. A human learns by pattern recognition. Seeing, hearing, etc the same thing over and over until you understand it.

God doesn't want you to 'be good', He wants you to 'want to be good'. He wants you to understand why you should be good. If He wanted He could have a race of mindless drones that

did what He wanted, because they are programmed to. However, He made us. Creatures that can defy Him, that in doing so prove that to defy Him is pointless.

Free will is the ultimate test of His infinite power (as well as the ultimate test of a person's character). "Can God create a rock so heavy, He can't lift it?" as the saying goes. Can God sacrifice all His power over us, and yet still bring us back to Him? Will we understand and accept the ultimate truth about existence, the 'meaning of life' so to speak? Can God prove He is God, without using His dominant power over us? That'll probably be up to us, we have free will after all.

That's the way I see it anyway.