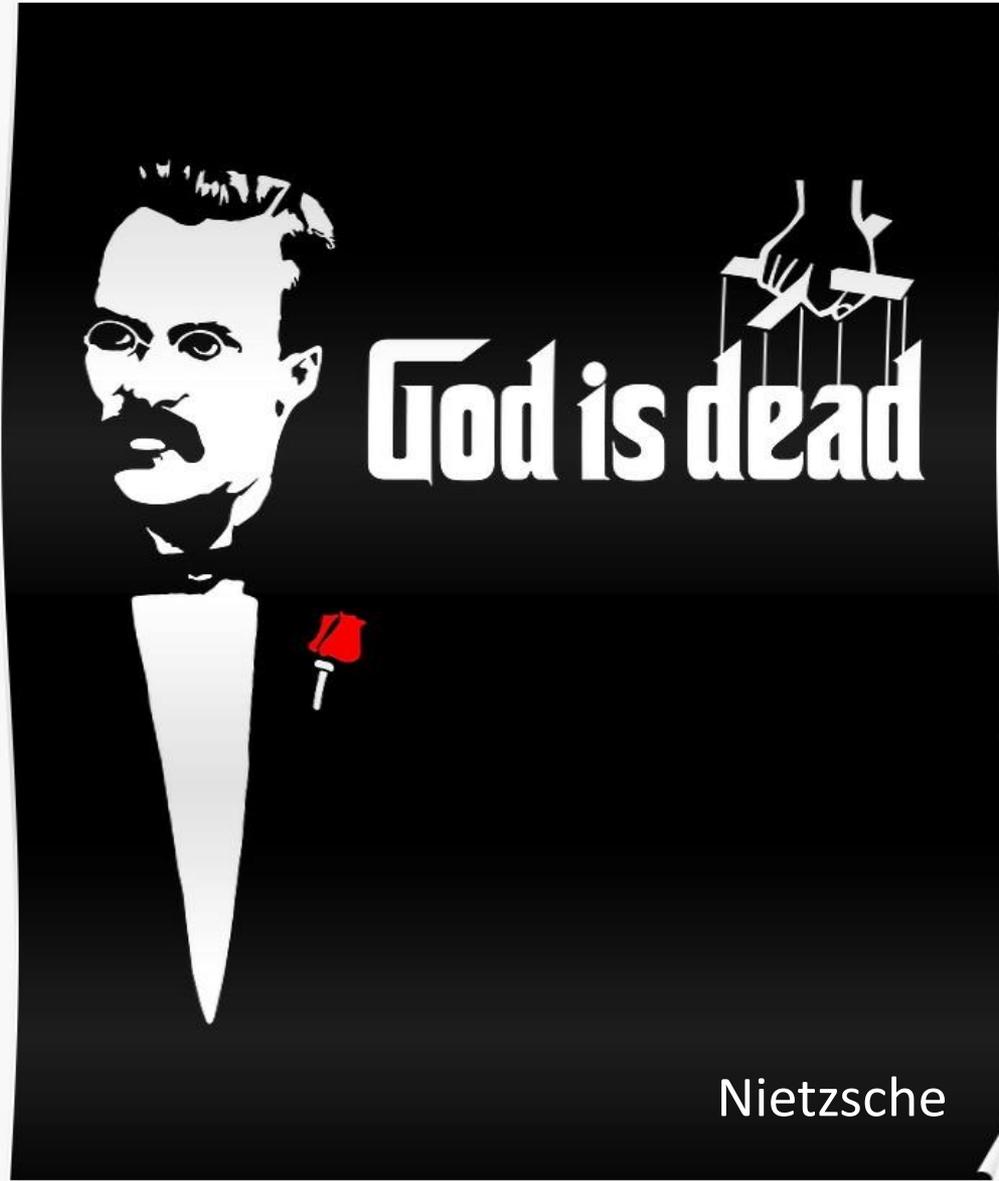


Objections to God's Attributes



1. Omniscience vs. Freedom

- If God has perfect foreknowledge of what we will choose, how are we free? Either God doesn't really know everything or we're not really free.
- "Foreknowledge" is a misnomer. God is outside of time and space.
- God is the primary cause of everything, but he's not the secondary cause of everything.
- Just because I know what my child will choose, my knowledge doesn't constrain or cause the choice.

2. Evil and Suffering

If there is evil and suffering in the world, then God is not omnipotent and/or not benevolent. God wouldn't let bad things happen to us if he really loved us, would He?

1. Original Sin broke our nature.

Example 1: Rat Poison



Example 2: Your Pet Dolphin



We were created to live for and with God. The rebellion against our purpose and nature brought terrible consequences.

Not only Adam and Eve suffered the repercussions, but so did all of their descendants. Just like a pregnant heroin addict passes the addiction on to her baby, Adam and Eve transmitted their sinful tendencies (concupiscence) to their offspring.

Their fallen nature was passed on to us! Just as in medieval times a landowner could have his property taken away because he committed a crime, and therefore couldn't bequeath the property to his heirs, so also Adam and Eve were deprived of the pure nature that was theirs, and therefore couldn't pass on a pure nature.

“Therefore, sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned.” (Rom. 5:12)

In the Garden of Eden, man lived in a state called Original Justice:

creation → man body → soul senses → reason reason → God

Sin fractured our nature and shattered the whole natural order. (Analogy of three magnetized rings)

“For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now, and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.” (Rom. 8:19-23)

Before the fall, man was capable of suffering and dying but didn't. After the fall, suffering and death became necessary consequences of

creation ~~→~~ man body ~~→~~ soul

Before the fall, man was capable of sinning but didn't. After the fall, sin became almost inevitable because

senses ~~→~~ reason reason ~~→~~ God

The undeserved grace of Original Justice was lost, and could be restored only through the undeserved mercy of God. Now let's turn our attention to how our fallen nature was restored.

Evil and Suffering

2. Before the Incarnation. Three aspects of justice:
(correction includes reparation of damage)

a) retribution – was happening but was insufficient,
because hell was deserved

b) correction – could happen but generally wasn't

c) reward – couldn't happen

3. Incarnation. The regeneration of human nature!

a) retribution – still happening but now sufficient;
hell could now be avoided

b) correction – now happens as an ongoing process

c) reward – could now happen (in virtue of Christ's
passion and death)

4. Why do we still suffer after the Incarnation?

- Retribution and correction are still happening.
- God allows people the freedom to offend Him and to hurt each other.
- God can use evil and suffering to bring about a greater good.

Michael Landon, USC

Ed Wright, Colorado

Jesus Christ

5. Why did Christ suffer at all?

- The Father didn't desire it directly but permitted it.
- Love, not suffering, is what gains merit for us.
- "*Quod non assumptum, non sanatum est.*" (Nazianzen)
- Substitution is not the same as representation. Christ did both: in His innocence, He substituted for us; in His humanity, He represented us.

6. Why did Christ suffer so much? (cf. ST III, q46, a3)

- Love is best proven through sacrifice.
- It was virtually inevitable, considering Christ's mission and the sinfulness of his enemies.
- There is more merit in that which is difficult; the passion and death of Christ not only satisfied retributive and corrective justice, which the Incarnation alone did, but it also won for us the capacity to gain merit ourselves. Christ OVERPAID the debt! Mercy transcends justice.

(The Incarnation made us open cups instead of closed cups. The Passion/Death turned us into open buckets capable of earning merit, not just passively receiving it.)

7. What's the meaning of our suffering?

- It is united to Christ's (Mt. 25:34-40); his sufferings are ours, our sufferings are his.

- Col. 1:24 (we “fill up what is lacking”)
- Simon of Cyrene
- This is what “offering it up” means!

How Merit Is Gained by Christ and by Us

love $\xrightarrow{\text{expressed in}}$ **obedience** $\xrightarrow{\text{leads to}}$ **suffering**
(to what God wills)

suffering $\xrightarrow{\text{accepted in}}$ **obedience** $\xrightarrow{\text{turns into}}$ **love**
(to what God allows)

Christ allows us to share in his sufferings,
so that we can share in his merits.

What about the suffering of the innocent?

- Those who have died are rejoicing now in God's presence. Their lives were a success!
- Perhaps God in His wisdom has spared them a worse fate.
- Perhaps God in His mercy has allowed them to become our intercessors.
- We can't call God cruel just because we can't explain the suffering of the innocent.
- God allowed suffering to befall the most innocent one of all: His Son. And He had a good reason for it. So if He allows other innocent people to suffer, it must be for a good reason.
- Why bad things happen to good people is still a mystery, but God suffered, too; He didn't spare His only Son. The worst suffering happened to the most innocent Person.

What should be our initial response to suffering?

- COMPASSION

Summary of Evil and Suffering

- Evil is a privation, not an actual thing.
- Evil and suffering come about because human beings have free will, which is a great good. The inherent risk of freedom doesn't negate its good.
- God can permit evil and suffering in order to bring about a greater good in the long run.
- For the Christian, suffering is a consequence of original sin, but it is also redemptive and meritorious when united to the Passion of Christ.
- Evil and suffering manifest God's mercy, causing gratitude in those who receive it. (Mt. 18:12-14)
- Evil and suffering make heroic virtue possible.
- Gratitude is greater because evil makes us appreciate more what we have; evil makes the good more desirable.

3. The Trinity

(Handout of notes from the Summa)

