

Michael Peterson, ed., The Problem of Evil: Selected Readings, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992, ix + 391 pp., \$44.95 (cloth), ISBN 0-268-01514-7, \$19.95 (paper), ISBN 0-268-01515 - 5.

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No other anthology effectively organizes so many previously published essays and excerpts covering such a wide range of philosophical issues on the problem of evil. Classic statements of the problem include Job, Aquinas, Hume, Dostoevsky, Camus, and Wiesel. Three versions of the problem of evil are represented: the standard Mackie and Plantinga pieces on the badly named "logical problem" (the idea that God and evil are logically incompatible), an exchange between Michael Martin and David Basinger over the "evidential problem" (the idea that God and evil are probabilistically incompatible), and two unrelated essays on what is sometimes called "the existential problem", a clever one by Hasker employing the logic of regret and a second, more religiously sensitive, one by Marilyn McCord Adams emphasizing the redemptive value of suffering as modeled in martyrdom. Three perspectives in theodicy are presented and criticized: Augustine's rejection of the claim that there is genuine evil, Hick's contention that the world is a vale of soul-making, and the process theodicy's claim that God (properly conceived) doesn't have the power to prevent evil. The last part of book is devoted to four "hot" topics: Must God create the best world He can? If the free-will defense explains moral evil, can it be extended to explain natural evil?, Must one believe in libertarian freedom in order to affirm Plantinga's free will defense?, and Are theoretical discussions of the problem of evil morally insensitive and should they give way to, say, retelling the stories of victims or working to alleviate their suffering? Peterson closes with a helpful 25-page bibliography.

For anyone seeking an entry into classical and contemporary philosophical literature on the problem of evil, this book is a great place to start. However, save for its heuristic value, it will be of little interest to those familiar with the issues. (It is nice, though, to have a lot of these pieces in one place.) Considered as a text, the main drawback is Peterson's selection of essays for the evidential version of the problem of evil. The Martin and Basinger pieces are OK, but, given the explosion of recent work on the evidential problem of evil, I would have liked something more up-to-date, or just plain better. On the atheist's side, just about anything from William Rowe is preferable to Martin, e.g., Rowe's 1979 article, "The Problem of Evil and Varieties of Atheism," collected in The Evidential Argument from Evil (forthcoming from Indiana University Press), or his "Evil and Theodicy," Philosophical Topics (1988). Bruce Russell's "Persistent Problem of Evil", Faith and Philosophy (1989) is also preferable. A version of the evidential argument that has captured the interest of many, and which entirely sidesteps Basinger's complaints, is Paul Draper's 1988 essay "Pain and Pleasure: An Evidential Problem for Theists," collected in The Evidential Argument from Evil. (Peterson mysteriously omits Draper's article from the bibliography, an unfortunate mistake.) On the theist's side, Stephen Wykstra's "The Humean Obstacle to Evidential

Arguments from Suffering," International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion (1984) and William Alston's 1991 piece, "The Inductive Argument from Evil and the Human Cognitive Condition," collected in The Evidential Argument from Evil, are more engaging and philosophically interesting than Basinger's article.

In closing, let me make one critical remark about Martin's version of the evidential problem of evil. His argument is this: 1. The abundance of evil falsifies theism unless there is a morally sufficient reason for God to permit so much evil rather than a lot less. 2. After repeated attempts, no one has provided a good reason to believe that there is a morally sufficient reason for God to permit so much evil rather than a lot less. 3. There is no positive evidence for theism. So, 4. theism is improbable and we should believe that there is no God. 1 seems true, since it is not possible for God to permit so much evil rather than a lot less unless He has a morally sufficient reason to do so. Traditionally, theists have responded by denying 2 and 3. But I think that those who accept 2 and 3 - e.g., those who find theodicies and arguments for theism unconvincing, or even atheists - should not be happy with Martin's argument since the inferential principle used to move from the premises to the conclusion is false. That principle is this: If evidence E falsifies proposition P unless R, and there is no positive evidence for P, and after repeated attempts we have not found good reason to believe R, then E renders P improbable for us and we should believe that P is false. We can see that Martin's inferential principle is false if we reflect on cases in which we are rightly in doubt about whether we would have good reason to believe R, were R true. Let E = "My pet boa, Wally, was under my desk last Wednesday night", let P = "Wally was not under my desk last Thursday night", let R = "Wally moved in the interim", and recall that one way in which p can falsify q is if p entails the denial of q. The fact that Wally was under my desk last Wednesday night entails that he was under my desk last Thursday night, unless he moved. Of course, you have no evidence to think that Wally was not under my desk last Thursday night; and we can imagine that, upon diligently inquiring into the matter, you find no good reason to think Wally moved in the interim. (I never disclose the past whereabouts of Wally!) Thus, Martin bids you to conclude that, relative to the information you have, it is improbable that Wally was not under my desk Thursday night hence that you should believe that he was under my desk last Thursday night. Of course, it would be foolhardy for you to do such things. That's because you are rightly in doubt about whether you would have good reason to believe Wally moved, had he moved between Wednesday and Thursday. Mutatis mutandis, we would be foolhardy to infer that the abundance of evil renders theism improbable, at least on the basis of Martin's argument. For, surely, we are rightly in doubt about whether we would have good reason to believe that there is a morally sufficient reason for God to permit so much evil rather than a lot less, if He had such a reason.